

THE CANING OF CHARLES SUMNER

NORTH & SOUTH

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CIVIL WAR SOCIETY

VOLUME 12 • NUMBER 6

**"THE FEDERALS FOUGHT
LIKE DEVILS"**



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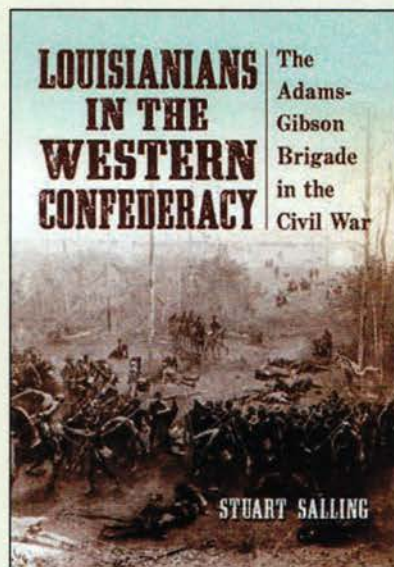
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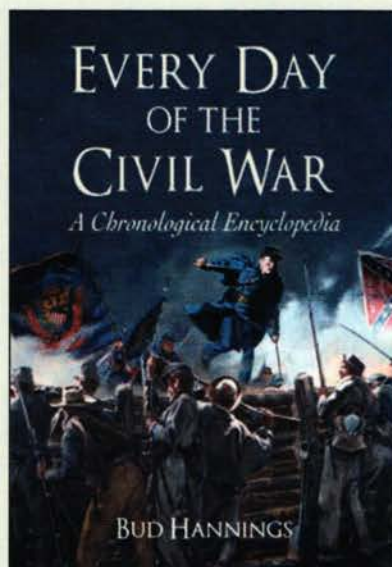
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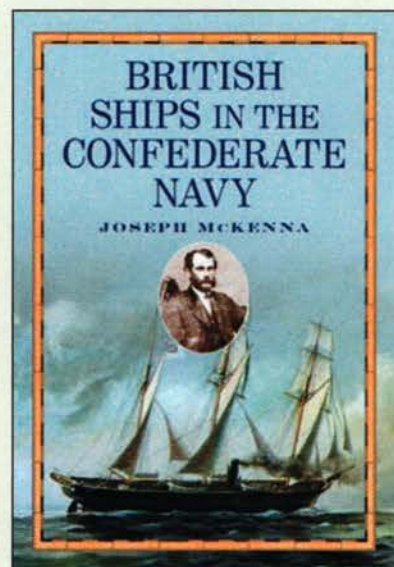
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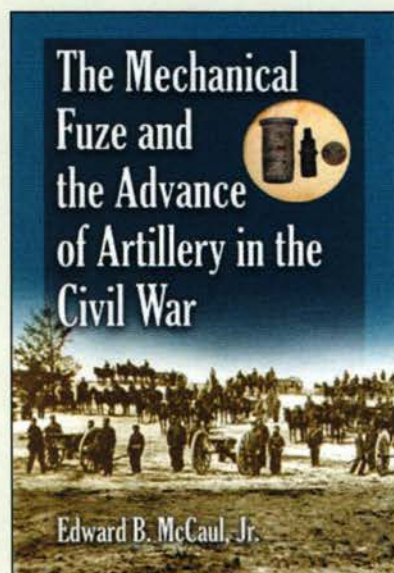
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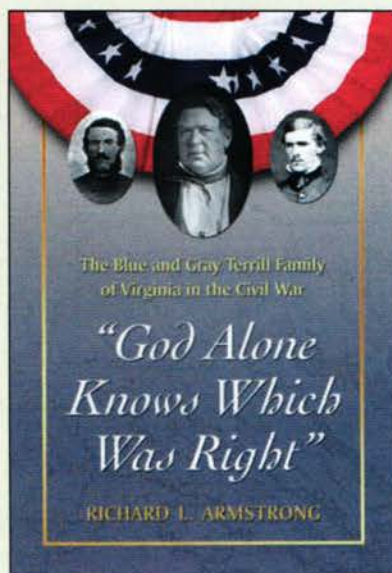
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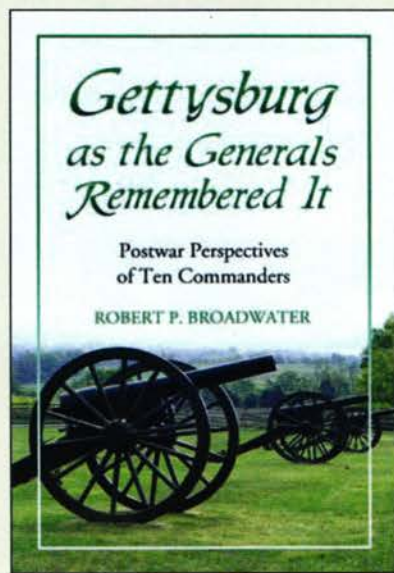
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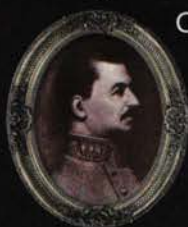


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EDITORIAL

by Keith Poulter

IT REALLY WASN'T ABOUT SLAVERY

Regular readers of *North & South* will know that we have published a whole series of articles covering the cause(s) of the Civil War. Although written from a variety of perspectives, taken as a whole they have presented a vast body of evidence concerning the relationship between slavery and the war. There are literally tens of thousands of pieces of such evidence, from letters to diaries, sermons to memoirs, speeches to regulations, and so forth. And from both Union and Confederate sources.

So what are we to make of those people today who categorically state "It had nothing to do with slavery"? Some, of course, are ideologues, with no interest in history except to twist it to serve their preconceived notions. Impervious to both reason and evidence, they cannot be engaged in a meaningful dialogue. But there are others—neither insane, nor stupid, nor ideologically fixated—who say the same thing. How to explain this?

I believe the answer lies in carefully considering what it is they mean. Taken literally, the statement is nonsense. But consider what they mean by "it." I think what they are saying is that for many (they would probably claim "most") of the men in gray, *the issue that concerned them was not slavery*. In other words they are not addressing the rising prewar sectional conflict between slave and free states, or the motivation of the fire-eaters, or the arguments of the Deep South secession ordinances (all of which point clearly to the causal connection between slavery and the war). They are referring only to the motivation of the Confederate rank and file. And interpreted in that sense, the statement is not nonsense. As said, we can then enter into a discussion about the extent to which Confederate soldiers were motivated by slavery/ state's rights, and so forth, and what the interconnections were between the various strands of motivation. I am willing to accept, for instance, that the Texan, en route to Kentucky, who left a sign at the side of the road that read "A FREE HOME OR A GRAVE" was not primarily motivated by the need to preserve slavery.

A similar approach can be taken toward the statement beloved of "Lost Cause" advocates, that "It wasn't a civil war." Quite obviously, the historical evidence is overwhelming that it *was* in fact a civil war. Granted the secessionists controlled the state machinery of eleven states, which made it in part a "war between the states." But internecine warfare across much of the South, the fact that neighbor frequently fought neighbor, and that no fewer than thirteen states contributed *white* regiments to *both* sides, makes it crystal clear it was a civil war. So again, leaving aside the ideologically impaired, how can any sane person make the statement that "it wasn't a civil war"? Again we need to look beyond the surface and try to see what the speaker is getting at. In this case, the point being made is that rather than a conflict between factions in a single polity, the war was between two equally sovereign states. In other words that secession was legal. Once we understand that, we have something to discuss. We probably won't agree, but at least we can discuss the pros and cons rather than simply regarding the person making the statement as a complete idiot.

Of course, it's dangerous to interpret what someone says, rather than taking his statements at face value. But I believe doing so would help "Lost Cause" advocates and the rest of us to stop talking past one another, and engage in rational debate. Of course, I am a hopeless optimist!



ABE

In your November issue, Harold Holzer's review of my book *Lincoln Über Alles: Dictatorship Comes to America* resorted to name-calling and blatantly false statements as a means of discrediting the important issues I raise.

Holzer's review falsely states, "the author actually argues that socially-restricted life for free blacks in the North was far crueler than that facing enslaved blacks in the South." I made no such argument in my book and Holzer's assertion that I did is a lie. I said there were *no clean hands*—North, South, East, or West—in regards to pre-war racial justice in America. Much has been published about "Jim Crow" laws in the South, as if it were an exclusively southern phenomenon, which it is not. I compiled a long list of Jim Crow laws in the pre-war North (of which little has been written), not as an attempt to justify racial injustice elsewhere, rather to demonstrate there was no racial justice anywhere. Having made this point, the Civil War could not have been about the establishment of racial justice in the South if such justice was *nowhere* to be found.

If Holzer believes there already was racial justice in the North in 1860 I suggest he find a single jurisdiction where free blacks were actually citizens, much less welcomed.

My book critically analyses a body of information that has been overlooked in the debate about whether secession is a lawful and legitimate power of the States. *Lincoln Über Alles* analyses thirty precedent-setting cases before the U.S. Supreme Court from

1793 to 2001. The principles adopted by the Court in these cases support the argument that secession is an attribute of state sovereignty, and no Court has ever attempted to draw the boundary where one attribute ends and another begins (including Chase's discredited *Texas v. White* opinion in 1869). Yet Holzer dismisses without discussion this body of newly analyzed information, found nowhere else in print, as nothing but rehash.

I establish that the Court has long held unconstitutional the principle known as "legislative entrenchment." Legislative entrenchment is the principle that any act a prior legislature had the authority to pass, a future legislature has the same authority to modify or repeal. This principle goes back to the Roman Republic, and the Court has struck down every law that infringes on a future legislature's authority to modify or repeal.

Thus, if the legislatures in the four Southern states that seceded in 1860-61 were competent to call a convention to ratify the Constitution in 1787-90, they were equally competent to call a convention in 1860-61 and enrobe it with the same authority as the original convention. This is what South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and North Carolina did; they called a second convention with the same authority of the first, and repealed the ratification of the first. Holzer's review did not even mention this. If he found fault in this idea, why didn't he dispute it rather than resort to false accusations and name-calling?

—John Avery Emison

I stand confidently behind my review and while I hardly mean to recommend that serious readers need to purchase or even leaf through the book in question, any such perusal would more than confirm its author's biased view of Lincoln and the history of both slavery and liberty in America. To go into a point-by-point

rebuttal would only add undeserved credence to the book's absurd claims about the legality of secession and the unimportance of slavery as a cause of disunion and war.

This last point, however, has been raised with such disturbing regularity in recent months that it cries out for a reality check. For far too long, Civil War enthusiasts have been entirely too tolerant of the false suggestion that Southern States abandoned their loyalty to the U. S. after Lincoln's 1860 election because of issues like the tariff and local rights. Any reading of the proceedings of the secession conventions leaves little doubt that what the South feared most (and almost exclusively) was the threat the new President posed to slaves and slavery and its aristocracy's right to own other human beings. Every serious historian of the period--and every serious reader--is obliged, I think, to make this reality manifest over the next four years of sesquicentennial observances, however painful. Slavery caused secession and war, and no whitewashing of this truth should be tolerated.

—Harold Holzer

MAC

I just finished Gregory A. Thiele's article on "McClellan at Antietam" in the Volume 12, #4 North & South and was not very impressed. Thiele said very little that was new, and although the article was designed to cast McClellan in a somewhat better light, Thiele basically confirmed Stephen Sear's scathing indictment of "Little Mac's" colossal bungling in the Maryland Campaign.

Thiele made some comments that were quite questionable, especially his claim that Lee's left flank was anchored on the Potomac (while his right flank rested on Antietam Creek) and therefore McClellan had "few opportunities to maneuver against the Confederate

flanks. Lee's left flank was nowhere near the Potomac and actually ended in the vicinity of the West Woods. Lee's left was effectively "up in the air" and the uncoordinated Union assaults came very close to wrecking it on the morning of September 17. As for Lee's right flank, as Thiele points out, there were fordable sections of Antietam Creek downstream from the Burnside Bridge which, if utilized, would have placed Union troops in the rear of Lee's position!

Also dubious was Thiele's assertion that Lee's center was drawn along a commanding ridge line. Has Thiele ever visited the battlefield? I have been to Antietam many times and have been struck by the fact that Lee's center was actually anchored on ground that fell off sharply from the Union position in the East Woods. The famed "Sunken Road" was aptly named. The Confederates could not see the approaching Union lines until they emerged from the high ground in their immediate front a few hundred feet away. This position could have been easily taken without a direct frontal assault and the Union soldiers who were cut down in front of the Sunken Road were the victims of monumental ineptitude on the part of the Union high command. Indeed, Lee's center collapsed quickly once Union soldiers simply maneuvered over to the high ground east of the Sunken Road and unleashed a devastating enfilade fire. This could have been done with no frontal attacks had Union officers taken time to reconnoiter the Confederates' vulnerable position. Once the center of the line did fall apart, the road to Sharpsburg, and the splitting in half of Lee's army, was wide open. Thiele makes no mention of McClellan's insane decision to order his men to "hold their position" when it was plain to see that hardly any rebel troops stood in their way. Good grief, if Lee had all those hidden legions, as McClellan apparently feared, wouldn't he have used them to reinforce the center of his line before it caved in?

Thiele fails to address McClellan's failure to recognize that the purely reactive defensive battle waged by Lee, coupled with the Union's limited tactical success on Lee's left, right and center, was compelling evidence that

the Army of Northern Virginia did not outnumber the Army of the Potomac, and that a more aggressive approach on McClellan's part was justified. Thiele also does not explain the inexplicable indifference of the Union high command to the vulnerable Confederate artillery position on Nicodemus Ridge on the extreme left of Lee's line, from which position the rebel gunners wreaked havoc on Union troops throughout the battle. The taking of Nicodemus Ridge should have been the first order of business for the Army of the Potomac on September 17, not disjointed attacks in the Cornfield, West Woods and the area around the Dunker Church.

Interestingly, Thiele is completely silent as to McClellan's failure to resume his attacks on the morning of September 18. Indeed, how could McClellan still imagine that he was outnumbered with Lee's entire retracted line in open view?

Thiele's evaluation of McClellan as "a very conservative general who was averse to taking risks" does not even begin to address McClellan's egregious mismanagement of the battle of Antietam.

—Dennis Middlebrooks
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Ed. I think the thrust of the article was that the possibility of destroying the Army of Northern Virginia was not nearly as great as is often claimed, and that therefore the opportunity missed by McClellan's admittedly appalling generalship was not such as might have ended the war. If true, it is unfair to blame McClellan for missing an opportunity that really didn't exist. Of course, McClellan was a past-master at blowing any opportunity offered him.

PROCLAMATION

Ed. I frequently have interesting exchanges with readers via email. The following are some of the messages exchanged with Dan Williams of Pell City, Alabama. Dan had initially sent a message arguing that the Emancipation Proclamation freed no-one. I responded:

Dan,
The fact is that the Proclamation did

immediately (or if you prefer, within a few days and weeks, as it was implemented) free perhaps as many 50,000 slaves. The evidence of notices that were posted and the written record both of soldiers and of slaveholders is quite clear. And of course, as the Union army advanced, more were freed (and conversely when the Confederate army reoccupied some areas (e.g., Winchester), freed slaves were often thrust back into slavery, or in some cases hanged.

As I pointed out in the issue, Tennessee and certain parts of Virginia and SE Louisiana were exempted from the Proclamation, even though occupied by the Union army. But in all other occupied areas (in 8 or 9 states) slaves were immediately declared free by the Proclamation, and actually freed by the actions of the Union army. Of course slaveholders bitterly resisted, as the woman quoted did, but they had no choice in the matter. As for the majority of slaves, behind Confederate lines, they were declared free by the Proclamation, but not actually freed until the Union army advanced into their area.

The oft-repeated statement that "no slaves were freed by the Proclamation" is simply untrue. It's one of those Civil War myths that gets repeated by author after author, but is nevertheless nonsense.

Keith,

I have oft heard the expression "The Emancipation Proclamation did not free a single slave". The argument being that Abe had no legal authority where the Confederate government and military were in control. The citizens in the South did not awake on January 1, 1863 and decide to free their slaves because someone in another Nation proclaimed it so. Your reasoning that union soldiers went out of their way to enforce the edict is thin considering they were already pretty good at freeing contrabands, runaways, livestock, home furnishings, etc. The issue is revealed, What did the proclamation mean? To the South, absolutely nothing! Nonsense? I don't think so.

—Dan Williams
Pell City Alabama

Dan,
Confederates no doubt considered it not legally binding, but we weren't talk-

ing about what someone thought, but what actually happened. Slaves were freed from bondage, removed from the control of their masters, escorted to safety behind Union lines, no longer subject to the lash or having their children sold away. Irrespective of what Jeff Davis and others thought about their legal status, I think that amounts to "freeing the slaves." That is, freeing them in fact. If you don't agree, then clearly we're speaking a different language.*

P.S. Actually Abe's executive orders were legal (if not yet enforceable) throughout the United States, a nation which included Texas, Florida, et al. One hundred thousand loyal white southerners who fought for the Union certainly would have thought so.

Dan then sent on to say that I was obviously determined not to accept the existence of the Confederate States of America. Actually, it wasn't the existence of the Confederacy I was questioning, but its legal status. At no time did the Confederate government exert political authority over an area that was recognized as its sovereign territory, and its alone. On the contrary, the entire area claimed by the Confederacy was simultaneously claimed by the U.S.A. It was the latter claim, resting upon seventy or so years enacted, recognized, and operational sovereignty, that continued to be recognized by the family of nations, membership to which the secessionists aspired but failed to achieve. It was the dual claim that the war was about.

* See also my editorial: It Really Wasn't About Slavery.

OOPS!

Keith,

Thanks for the many thought-provoking articles. In the January 2011 edition Michael Halleran's "Freemasons in the Civil War" related a story about Antietam regarding soldiers in the 5th New Hampshire rescuing a wounded officer in the 10th Alabama who lay wounded in Miller's cornfield. While the incident may well have occurred, both units were nowhere near the Miller farm at Antietam. The mistake is likely confusing the cornfield west

of the Sunken Road on the Piper farm with the more famous Miller cornfield several hundred yards to the north. The article is nonetheless fascinating and I enjoyed reading it.

—Tom Clemens
Keedysville, MD

The article on Price's Raid in your recent number included the finest account of underground railroad activity in New York's 'burned over' district through the experiences of those who were intimately involved. I further agree with your editorial regarding the historical relevance of personal experience in understanding the greater movement of history. It is a concept that I am presently researching involving U.S.C.T. On page 14 of the article there is a copy of a print which is titled "Border Ruffians". This print actually depicts formerly enslaved Africans in migration. I used the same print in my self-published book, "Champions of the Exodusters: The Saga of Rev. Moses Dickson, Captain Charlton Hunt Tandy and the Black Pioneers", 2004. A study of the Exodusters Movement through the personal experiences of two of its most influential leaders. You have the finest military magazine on the market, and I read many of them. For individuals who want to get past entertainment and into education and genuinely begin a national catharsis on slavery and civil conflict your well documented articles, written by the best scholars in the field, are the place to begin.

—John H. Whitfield
Bassett, Virginia

LAST BATTLE

In your recent issue there is an article titled "The Last Battle of the Civil War" claiming that this took place on April 16, 1865, in Columbus, Georgia. I am afraid that this claim is wrong.

Here in South Carolina during what is known as "Potter's Raid" when a light division of about 2,500 Federal troops invaded Sumter County on April 9th 1865 to destroy a hidden cache of Confederate trains a series of battles and skirmishes ensued lasting up to April 21, 1865. There was a battle at Boykin's Mill on April 18th, a skirmish at Dinkin's Mill and a short fight at Beech Creek on April 19th. The Beech Creek fight is, in fact, listed in our history here as the last official battle of the war in South Carolina.

—Robert L. Brown
Adjunct Faculty, USC-Sumter

The controversy over which combat should be regarded as the Civil War's last real battle is a perennial one. This is in part due to the US Department of the Interior's refusal in 1936 to be drawn into the uncomfortable position of having to decide which among several contesting sites should be officially considered that of the war's last battle. (Interestingly, their refusal letter indicated a preference for Saylor's Creek — a fight almost no one considers the war's last battle today.) With no "official" designation, nor even an "official" set of guidelines, the debate is sure to continue.

—Charles Misulia

COVER STORY

This issue's front cover painting by Dale Gallon, titled "For Distinguished Gallantry," depicts First Lieutenant Edward B. Williston, commander of Battery D, 2nd U.S. Artillery, at Trevilian Station, Virginia, on June 12, 1864. Lieutenant Williston moved a 12 lb Napoleon cannon into the skirmish line of the 2nd U.S. Cavalry and was instrumental in repelling a Confederate assault. The young lieutenant was awarded the Medal of Honor for "distinguished gallantry."





Albert A. Nofi

Knapsack

A CIVIL WAR DIGEST

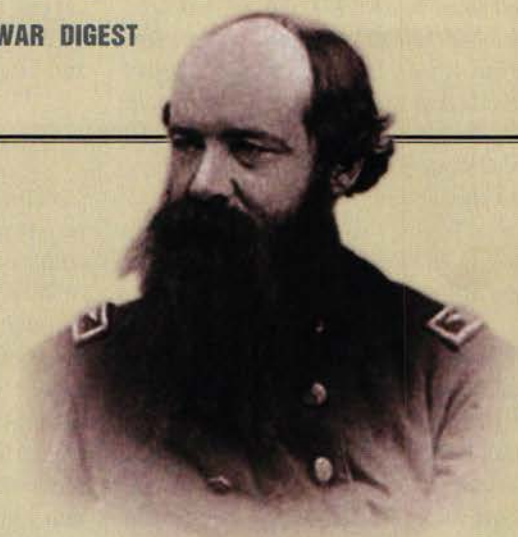
► **Major James Chatham Duane**

▼ **Robert H. Milroy** (1816-1890) had a less than glamorous career as a Union general.

FROM THE GRAPEVINE

- Stationed at the Benicia Barracks, in California, in 1852, Lieutenant U.S. Grant and some fellow-officers of the 4th Infantry opened a billiards club in a San Francisco hotel, but the business failed when the civilian manager absquatulated with their money.
- Of 114 surgeons in the United States Army at the start of the secession crisis, in November of 1860, only 27 "went South" or were dismissed for disloyalty, slightly less than a quarter, lower than the proportion of all Regular Army line officers who joined the Confederacy, nearly a third.
- Evaluating the plan of the 48th Pennsylvania to detonate a mine under Confederate lines at Petersburg in July of 1864, Major James Chatham Duane, Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac, studied British and French attempts to blow up the Russian defenses at Sebastopol, nearly a decade earlier.
- Established in June of 1861, by October the Confederate ammunition factory at Bird Island, near Richmond, was employing 700 workers, 60-percent of whom were women, turning out about 200,000 musket cartridges a day.
- Having captured Winchester from Union forces under Major General Robert H. Milroy on June 15, 1863, the men of Confederate Lieutenant General Richard Ewell's Second Corps found a rich haul of supplies, and went around "drinking Milroy juleps, smoking Milroy Havanas." The 65th Colored Infantry, which served from March 11, 1864, to March 20, 1866, had the dubious distinction of having more deaths from disease than any other Union regiment, losing 750 officers and men out of a total of nearly 1,770 enrolled, over 42-percent, an average of slightly over one for each of the 739 days the regiment was in service, though not a single man died in combat.
- Early in July of 1861, ordered to move the newly raised 21st Illinois Volunteers some 116 miles from central Illinois to a post on the Mississippi, Colonel U.S. Grant turned down an offer of rail transport because "The men are going to be doing a lot of marching before the war is over and I prefer to train them in friendly country, rather than in the enemy's."
- Since contemporary custom required candidates to modestly refrain from appearing actually to want to be president, when Abraham Lincoln went to the polls on November 6, 1861, thinking it inappropriate to vote for himself, on the advice of his law partner William Herndon, he cut off the top part of the ballot and voted for the rest of the Republican ticket.

► **Stephen Dodson Ramseur** (1837-1864)

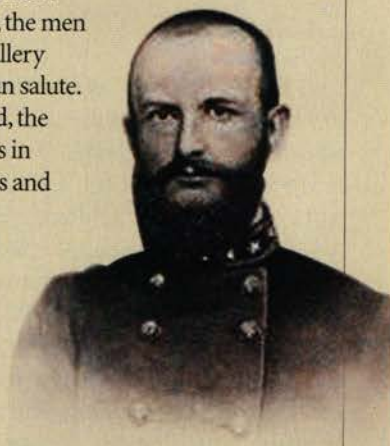


SHORT ROUNDS

First Blood

On May 1, 1861, in the aftermath of the firing on Ft. Sumter and Lincoln's call for volunteers, the North Carolina state legislature authorized a special election for delegates for a convention that would consider the question of secession. The delegates met in Raleigh on May 20th, and debated the issue into the late afternoon, while a large festive crowd gathered outside the capitol and the men of the Ellis Light Artillery positioned their six pieces to be ready to fire a celebratory salute. Only recently formed, the battery had an odd assortment of pieces; two 12-pounder howitzers, three 6-pounder bronze smooth bore cannon, and one 3-inch rifled cannon. But under the guidance of their commander, 23-year old Captain Stephen Dodson Ramseur, the men had worked hard to learn their trade and were ready when the call to duty came.

At about 5:30 p.m. the delegates voted unanimously to take North Carolina out of the Union. Almost immediately, the men of the Ellis Light Artillery began firing a 100 gun salute. As the cannon loosed, the blasts broke windows in nearby private homes and businesses. The gunners maintained a steady rate of fire, no easy task even without the dangers of battle. After each shot, the gun had to be swabbed



"Before I will leave them to the enemy, I will lose many more men"

—Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, urged to abandon his wounded,
after losing at Kernstown, March 23, 1862

out with a damp sponge, to insure no embers remained in the barrel, then wiped dry, a new charge had to be loaded, and a primer set before the gun could fire again. Well-trained, the troops performed their duties smoothly.

Then fate intervened.

Withdrawing his swab from his gun, one of the troops accidentally hit a bulldog that had wandered into the firing line. The dog, already hyper due to the loud cannon blasts, promptly locked his jaws on the soldier's backside, so tightly that it required three men to pry them loose.

Thus did North Carolina suffer its first casualty in the war.

Colonel Marston's Guardhouse

In March of 1862, Colonel Gilman Marston's 2nd New Hampshire Infantry was assigned to the 1st Brigade of Major General Joseph Hooker's division in the Army of the Potomac, and was camped north of Washington, near Bladensburg, Maryland. Early that month, the brigade received a new commander, Brigadier General Henry M. Naglee.

Naglee (West Point, 1835), seems to have been an arrogant sort, with an abrasive personality and was something of a martinet; within a day after taking over the brigade, he had placed a number of officers and enlisted men under arrest on various technicalities. While inspecting the brigade's camp, he noticed that the regiment had erected a guard house. The building provided space for the officer of the day and regimental personnel, and, of course, included facilities for housing prisoners. Naglee decided that the place was much too good for Rebel prisoners. He ordered that the regiment put up a sturdier, more Spartan facility.

"Build it without a crack or opening," he said, "so that it will be perfectly dark."

Colonel Marston, a veteran of Bull Run, not to mention decades of courtroom machinations and political infighting in the Granite State, willingly complied.

Naturally, a few days later, when Naglee returned to visit the 2nd New Hampshire, he asked to see the new guardhouse. He found it a solidly built structure. The grim building, its walls unpierced by windows, seems to have greatly pleased Naglee, as he walked around it to examine each side. But then, upon completing a

circuit, he realized that there was no door.

He turned to Marston, demanding to know how prisoners were supposed to get inside.

"Oh," replied Marston, "that's not my lookout. I have obeyed orders strictly," adding, perhaps with a little smile flickering across his lips, "How does it suit you?"

INCIDENTS OF WAR **Jeff Davis Takes a Train**

In contrast to Abraham Lincoln's longer journey from Springfield to Washington, where he would assume the post of President of the United States, surprisingly little attention has been devoted to Jefferson Davis' equally important trip from Vicksburg to Montgomery, to assume the presidency of the Confederacy, a journey that began on the very same day.

Meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, on February 9, 1862, delegates from most of the recently seceded states elected Mississippian Jefferson Davis Provisional President of the Confederate States. At the time, Davis, who had recently resigned his seat in the U.S. Senate, was at Briarfield, his plantation about 20 miles south of Vicksburg, on the Mississippi, about 290 miles west of Montgomery.

Davis received unofficial word of his election on that very same day, his wife Varina recording that he was clipping roses in his garden when the telegram arrived, and that "when reading the telegram he looked so grieved that I feared some evil had befallen our family." Despite this, having had some inkling that he would probably be elected (presidential candidates in those days were supposed to pretend they *didn't* want the job), upon receiving the news, Davis acted with commendable speed. The next day, as hundreds of cables began arriving, some congratulatory, some proffering advice, and some blatantly asking for commissions, jobs, or other favors, Davis received official notice of his election, and telegraphed his acceptance. He began making plans to travel to Montgomery.

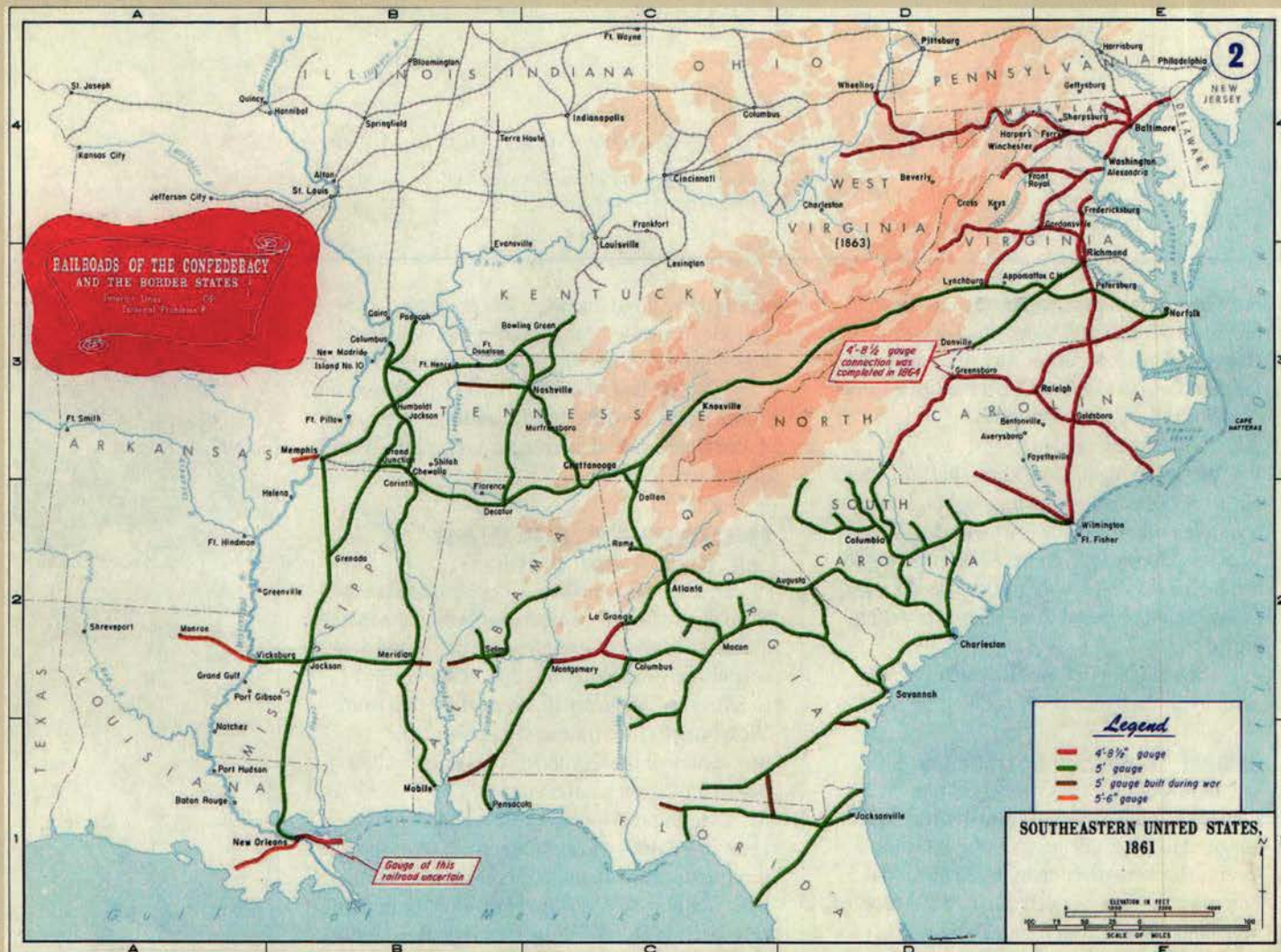
On Monday, February 11th, Davis left Briarfield for Montgomery; it was the same day Abraham Lincoln left Springfield, Illinois, for Washington. Several of his slaves rowed Davis about three miles down the Mississippi to the steamer landing at Ursino. Although for a moment it looked like he would miss the boat, Davis was able to catch the very new steamer



▲ **Colonel** (later major general) Gilman Marston (1811-1890)



▲ **Brigadier General** (later brigadier general) Henry Morris Naglee (1815-1886) was an abrasive fellow. In the summer of 1863 he refused to carry out the instructions of Governor Francis Pierpont, and was relieved of his command. He was mustered out of the service in April of the following year.



▲ Southern railroads at the start of the war. It is readily apparent how critical were locations such as Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Atlanta.

Natchez, by the well-known riverman Thomas P. Leathers, for the 35-some-mile ride upriver to Vicksburg, a journey of about five or six hours. Arriving at Vicksburg rather late in the day, Davis was welcomed by a crowd, a band, militiamen, cannon fire, and some of his Mexican War comrades from the 1st Mississippi Mounted Rifles, complete with the regimental standard. After a brief speech, he entrained on the recently completed Vicksburg & Meridian Railroad and headed east for Jackson, about 45 miles distant, where he was again given a tumultuous reception. Davis would spend most of the next three days in Jackson, meeting with various political and civic leaders, and coping with numerous telegrams. On the 12th, he wrote to Governor John J. Pettus to offer his "resignation of the office of Major Gen. of the Army of Mississippi," a post to which he had only recently been appointed. Soon after noon on Thursday, the 14th, he resumed his journey, taking the Mississippi Central north to Grand Junction, Tennessee.

From Grand Junction, which he reached during the wee hours on the 15th, Davis took the Memphis & Charleston east. The train made many stops, not only at the larger regional centers such as Corinth and Iuka, in Mississippi, and Decatur and Huntsville, in Alabama, but also at smaller places, often to

tumultuous welcomes. Apparently Davis made some 20 to 25 speeches during the trip, speaking at virtually every stop, most short addresses from the train. There's an anecdote—possibly bogus—that he became so tired of these speeches, he arranged for the conductor, upon hearing a certain phrase, to signal the engineer to begin moving out of the station while emitting whistles and steam.

Arriving at Chattanooga on the evening of the 15th, Davis boarded the Western & Atlantic probably about 8:00 pm, southbound for Atlanta, where he arrived around 3:00 or 4:00 am on the 16th. He checked into the Trout House, on Decatur and Pryor Streets, billed in a contemporary guide book as "by far the best hotel in Atlanta." Davis rose early, and under overcast skies, during a cold, drizzling rain, gave a speech to a crowd estimated at 5,000 or so that had gathered in the square in front of the hotel, an account of which appeared in the *Atlanta Gate-City Guardian* later that day, and, as was the custom of the times, was picked up and reprinted by other papers, in the North as well as the South.

Speech at Trout House

He began by saying how cordially he greeted the men who stood before him, fellow-citizens of the

Speaking of expansion, Davis pointed to "the West India Isles . . . and the Northern parts of Mexico."

Confederate States of America, and Georgians, the noblest title last. By the recollection of this soil being the birth place of his own father—of many of Georgia's sons standing by him in times of peace and war, and of this State's noble stand for the freedom of the South, he felt at home in their midst. He congratulated them all upon the fact that, after a fair trial of the disposition of the Government to do us justice, and a full conviction that this we would never get, we had cut loose from that "dead body," and were now able to settle, by treaty or arms, a question which a hypocritical pretence of conscience on the part of the North would never allow us to settle while united with them. Now, said Col. Davis, they are no more to be troubled with a "vicarious repentance" for us, and they will no more be called upon by the qualms of uneasy consciences to afflict themselves on our account. For the future, we are to be embraced in the same moral category as Cuba and Brazil, and the North are to feel for us the same accountability. He felt that, in the future, we had nothing to fear: he did not mean fear of physical afflictions, but of the great political result; our staple fed, as well as clothed, the world, and furnished indissoluble cords for binding together, in a grand homogeneous Union, the States now making common cause with us. He said that he had no fears about Expansion; there were the West India Isles, which, under the old Union, were forbidden fruit to us, and there were the Northern parts of Mexico. We ardently desire peace with the North—with the world; but come peace or war, just as it pleased them, he was ready, and he knew our people were. But still our policy was peace and Free Trade, and if nothing but the strong hand of Coercion would do the North, all we had to do would be to open our ports, grant Letters of Marque, and buy the last enterprising Yankee out of Boston!

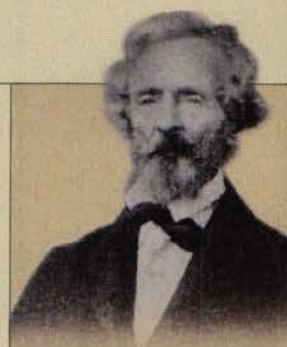
After occupying some minutes in elaborating this view of his subject, Col. Davis spoke of the labors before him, and the call that existed on all good patriots for patience and kind construction. All that his ability—all that his resources of mind or body, could effect in behalf of the new Government, should be cheerfully rendered; and hoping to meet his audience again under the brightest auspices, he bid them a most respectful adieu.

Albeit not a verbatim transcript, this seems to be the longest surviving account of any of the speeches Davis made during his journey, and, although not indicated by quotation marks, some of the lines read like they were

taken down word-for-word. Comparing it with reports of his speeches at several other stops along the way, such as Stevenson, Alabama, Newman, Ringgold, Cartersville, La Grange, and West Point, in Georgia, and Opelika and Auburn in Alabama, Davis seems to have had a few basic themes on which he extemporized, a sort-of "stump speech."

The speech concluded, still before noon he boarded an Atlanta & Montgomery train and headed southwest. Now the Atlanta & Montgomery actually had two subsidiaries. The Atlanta and West Point ended at the Georgia-Alabama state line. From there, one had to take the other subsidiary, the West Point & Montgomery. Unfortunately, the managers and engineers who built the Alabama portion of the line had opted for a track gauge—distance between the rails—of 4' 8". Although most lines in the North, as well as many in the Carolinas and some in Virginia, used the 4' 8" gauge, a 5' gauge was more common across the South. So at West Point, Davis had to change from the 5' Atlanta & West Point to take the 4' 8" Montgomery & West Point line for the final leg of his trip. Also boarding the train at West Point were two companies of militia from Columbus, Georgia, who accompanied the Provisional President to Opelika, Alabama.

During his journey, Davis was able to get some work done in the cars. Although sleepers were not yet common, the Memphis & Charleston supplied him with a car fitted up with a bed, on which he could catch cat naps. He reportedly slept in his clothes, since he had to make so many public appearances. During the trip he seems to have worked on his inaugural address. Davis also did a good deal of politicking during the journey. At various times local *prominenti* would board the train to greet him. Some would ride for a bit, and then get off, while others remained for the balance of the trip. He often had to deal with people seeking to shake his hand or asking for a job. On the first leg, from Vicksburg to Jackson, he was accompanied by his older brother Joseph E. Davis, a considerable political force in the South, Earl Van Dorn, recently resigned from the U.S. Army and shortly to become a major general in Confederate service, and Cotesworth P. Smith, Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court, a staunch secessionist. On the final leg of his journey, at Auburn, where Davis reviewed the local militia company, the "Auburn Guards" (later Company B, 45th Alabama), he was joined by William L. Yancey,



▲ **Joseph E. Davis**
(1784-1870), Jefferson Davis's older brother and a political power in Mississippi.

"now we are brethren, not in name, merely, but in fact—men of one flesh, one bone, one interest, and of identity of domestic institutions." Jefferson Davis

—Jefferson Davis



▲ The only known photograph of Jefferson Davis's inauguration speech in Montgomery.

one of the most prominent secessionist "fire-eaters," and a delegation of notable Alabamians, who escorted him to Montgomery.

The final leg of Davis' journey was described in the *Charleston Mercury* of February 19th.

MONTGOMERY, February 16. President Davis' trip from Jackson, Mississippi, to Montgomery, was one continuous ovation. He made no less than twenty-five speeches upon the route, returning thanks for complimentary greetings from crowds of ladies and gentlemen. There were military demonstrations, salutes of cannon, &c., at the various depots.

The Committee of Reception, appointed by the Southern Congress, and also the Committee appointed by the Montgomery authorities, met President Davis about 80 miles from the city and formally welcomed him. Two fine companies from Columbus, Ga., formed an escort to Opelika. The cortege reached Montgomery Friday night at ten o'clock. Salvos of artillery greeted his approach, and a very large crowd assembled at the depot, hailing his appearance with tremendous cheering. President Davis, returning thanks, said that he was proud to receive the congratulations and hospitality of the people of Alabama. He briefly reviewed the present position of the South. The time for compromise, he said, had passed, and our only hope was in a determined maintenance of our position, and to make all who oppose us smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel. If coercion should be persisted in, he had no doubt as to the result. We would maintain our right to self-government at all hazards. We ask nothing, want nothing, and will have no complications. If other States should desire to join our Confederation, they can freely come on our terms. Our separation from the old Union is complete. NO COMPROMISE; NO RECONSTRUCTION CAN BE NOW ENTERTAINED. (Tremendous applause.)

The *Mercury* went on to say that the Provisional President then was escorted to the Exchange House, the only decent hotel in town, where an enthusiastic crowd awaited him. At about 10:45 Davis spoke from a balcony, an address that the paper printed as:

Fellow Citizens and Brethren of the Confederate States of America—for now we are brethren, not in name, merely, but in fact—men of one flesh, one bone, one interest, one purpose, and of identity of domestic institutions. We have henceforth, I trust, a prospect of living together in peace, with

our institutions a subject of protection and not of defamation. It may be that our career will be ushered in, in the midst of storms it may be that as this morning opened with clouds, mist and rain, we shall have to encounter inconveniences at the beginning; but as the sun rose, lifted the mist, dispersed the clouds, and left a pure sunlight, Heaven so will prosper the Southern Confederacy, and carry us safe from sea to the safe harbor of constitutional liberty. (Applause.) Thus we shall have nothing to fear at home, because at home we shall have homogeneity. We have nothing to fear abroad, because, if war should come, if we must again baptise in blood the principles for which our fathers bled in the Revolution, we shall show that we are not degenerate sons, but will redeem the pledges they gave to preserve the sacred rights transmitted us, and show that Southern valor still shines as brightly as in the days of '76, in 1812, and in every other conflict:

I was informed by friends that your kindness only required that I should appear before you, fatigued, as I am, by travel, hoarse and unable to speak at length, and I came out merely to assure you of my gratitude for these manifestations of good will. I come with diffidence and distrust to discharge the great duties devolved on me by the kindness and confidence of the Congress of the Confederate States. I thank you, friends, for the kind manifestations of favor and approbation you exhibit on this occasion. Throughout my entire progress to this city I have received the same flattering demonstrations of generous support. I did not regard them as personal to myself, but tendered to me as an humble representative of the principles and policy of the Confederate States. I will devote to the duties of the high office to which I have been called all I have of heart, of head and of hand.

If, in the progress of events, it shall become necessary, and my services shall be needed in another position—if, to be plain, necessity shall require that I shall again enter the ranks as a soldier, I hope you will welcome me there.

Now, friends, again thanking you for this manifestation of your approbation, allow me to bid you good night.

This, the final speech of Davis' journey, appears to have been the only one that was taken down verbatim. On February 18th, Davis took the oath of office as Provisional President of the Confederacy, on front portico of the Alabama state capitol, an address in keeping with the spirit of his remarks at the Exchange Hotel.

*In his inaugural speech, Davis said the time had come
"to make all who oppose us smell Southern powder and
feel Southern steel."*

Now Davis' speeches at the Exchange and upon his inauguration are quite statesmanlike when compared with his "stump speech" as reported in the *Gate-City Guardian*, the *Charleston Mercury*, the *Atlanta Intelligencer*, and many other papers. As can be seen from the address at the Trout House, that stump speech was a fiery oration, including what the *Mercury* called a "spirited review of the causes of secession," with remarks about the "hell-born fanaticism" of certain circles in the North, predictions of the imminent adhesion of the Border States to the Confederacy and of swift foreign recognition, plus a pitch for the annexation of Cuba, the West Indies, and northern Mexico, before he concluded by saying that should war come, it would be hard, but that the North would suffer defeat and devastation, and sink into poverty, with the *Memphis Appeal* adding that he predicted that "grass would grow" in the streets of Northern cities.

In his memoirs, Davis claimed that the newspapers got a lot wrong, a charge that has subsequently been picked up by several of his biographers. To some extent he was correct. Certainly the *Charleston Mercury*, and other papers, were wrong to report that his journey "was one continuous ovation," for in a private letter to his wife Varina on February 20th, Davis wrote that there was a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for him in Tennessee, then still in the Union, though he noted that elsewhere "the people at every station manifested good-will and approbation by bon fires at night, firing by day; shouts and salutation in both." But Davis also claimed that Northern papers were deliberately trying to inflame the situation, which hardly explains the fiery accounts in the *Gate-City Guardian*, the *Mercury*, the *Intelligencer*, and the *Daily Appeal*, as well as other southern papers, that reported rather blistering rhetoric on his part. Speaking off the cuff, to enthusiastic crowds, Davis either got caught up in the spirit of the moment, or himself sought to stir up greater enthusiasm. Naturally, afterwards, like all good politicians, Davis blamed the press, while making his contribution to the "Lost Cause."

Davis' journey illustrates the weakness of the Southern rail net. Although Vicksburg and Montgomery are less than 290 miles apart, Davis had to travel a circuitous route that covered some 820 miles, and he was almost continuously

in the cars from the afternoon of the 14th until very late on the 16th. During his journey he twice had actually to leave the Confederacy, entering the United States, since he had to change trains at Grand Junction and again at Chattanooga, in Tennessee, which had voted heavily against secession just a few days before.

Jefferson Davis Itinerary

From	To	Miles	Hours *
Briarfield	Vicksburg **	c. 35	c. 5-6
Vicksburg	Jackson	c. 45	c. 3-4
Jackson	Grand Junction	c. 230	c. 15-16
Grand Junction	Chattanooga	c. 260	c. 18-19
Chattanooga	Atlanta	c. 120	c. 8-9
Atlanta	West Point	c. 85	c. 6
West Point	Montgomery	c. 80	c. 6

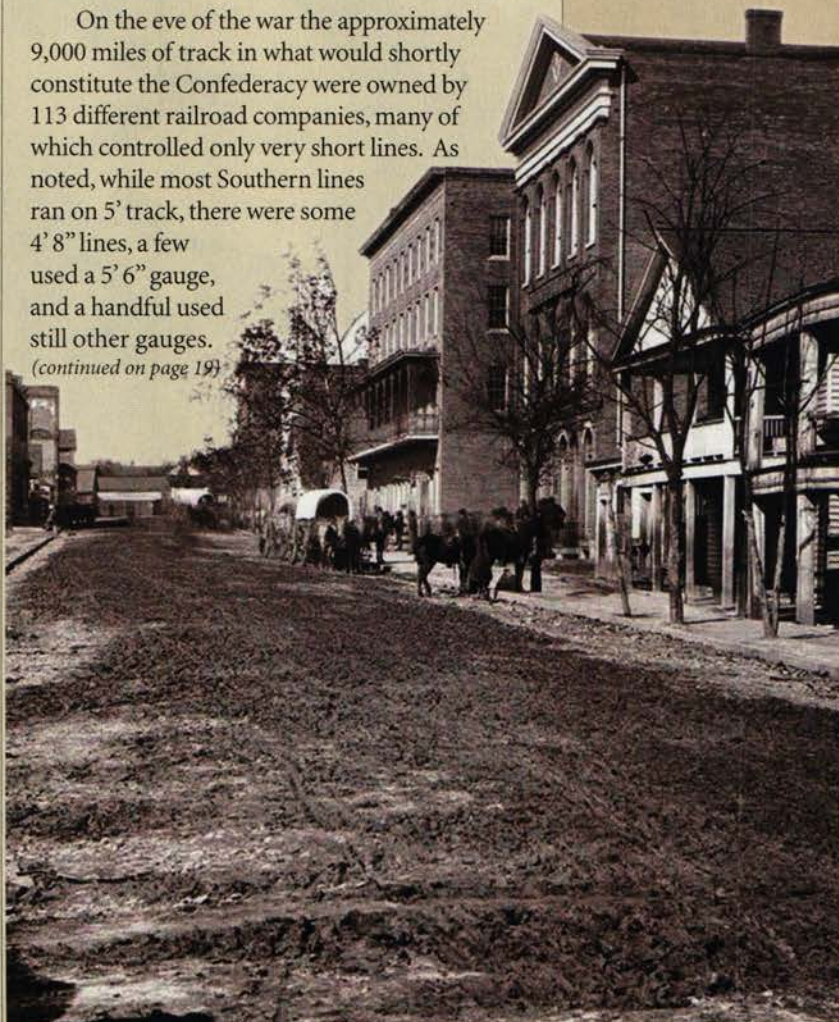
* Includes short layovers, but not the 60 or so hours he spent in Jackson nor the 4-6 hour stay in Atlanta.

** By steamer *Natchez*, all other legs being by rail.

On the eve of the war the approximately 9,000 miles of track in what would shortly constitute the Confederacy were owned by 113 different railroad companies, many of which controlled only very short lines. As noted, while most Southern lines ran on 5' track, there were some 4' 8" lines, a few used a 5' 6" gauge, and a handful used still other gauges.

(continued on page 19)

▼ Davis spoke from the balcony of the Trout House in Atlanta. In the above photograph there is a wagon standing directly outside the hotel.



THE CANING OF CHARLES SUMNER AND THE ORIGINS OF THE CIVIL WAR

By Williamjames Hull Hoffer



On May 22, 1856, Democratic Congressman Preston S. Brooks from South Carolina caned Republican Senator Charles Sumner from Massachusetts on the floor of the U.S. Senate. One of the critical events in the chain of events that led to the clash often referred to as the contest between North and South, the caning shows the divisions in the country in stark contrast. For Brooks, the most important part of his life was his honor. His frenzied attack on Sumner came from the demands of this social and cultural system that governed his state and his section, the South. For Sumner, the attack was as unthinkable as his speech two days before – “The Crime Against Kansas” – was necessary in all its provocative fury. In these two men, we have the two competing sections, their contrasting societies, their increasingly divergent interests, and the animosity growing into hatred leading up to the bloodiest war in U.S. history. A closer look at this incident can help us truly understand why the country engaged in the Civil War.

A community of Abolitionists could only be governed by a penitentiary system. They are as unfit for liberty as maniacs, criminals, or wild beasts. —*Richmond, Virginia, Enquirer (Democratic), (3 June, 1856)*



▲ **Charles Sumner** (1811-1874) has been described as "the least racist man in America in his day." In advocating the abolition of slavery and equal treatment of the races he was certainly on the side of the angels. But he was also an insufferably arrogant and egotistical moralist who antagonized not just his opponents, but also many of those who shared his anti-slavery views.

Congressional scuffles were far from rare, and, yet, this incident did capture the imagination both North and South. There was something more to it than one lawyer and lawmaker from the South smashing the head of another lawyer and lawmaker from the North. It may have had something to do with their states' respective roles in the history of the country, or the trajectory of their careers. It may have also been one of those unlikely confluences of several different larger trends: the completely different paths of Massachusetts and South Carolina, the rise of the controversy about the extension of slavery, the demise of an earlier generation of politicians committed to union at any cost, and the arrival of mass circulation newspapers combined with the telegraph's heightening of media controversies. All of these things created a witches' brew of antagonisms, political controversy, and dire threats.

Charles Sumner certainly provoked the attack with his oration on May 19 and 20, "The Crime Against Kansas," on the floor of the Senate. He did not hold back in either his rhetoric or the fierceness of his arguments. He accused Senator Andrew P. Butler of South Carolina as the "Don Quixote" of the debate over extending slavery to the Kansas territory. It was a reference to one of western literature's first novels, Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. The titular character was an elderly nobleman clearly not in his right mind. Taking on the

Butler's Quixote championed a "harlot" by the name of slavery. But, Sumner did not stop with this literary allusion. He also compared South Carolina's history with that of Kansas and found it wanting. He heaped personal scorn on Butler among others. In other words, he had gone far beyond any of his previous efforts.

It was not surprising that several of his fellow senators denounced the oration. Even Sumner's friend and ally New York's Republican senator, William Seward, worried that the personal denunciations were gratuitous. Unfortunately, we cannot credit their public criticisms. Sumner's enemies would not have pronounced upon the speech and the speaker unless they had formulated the remarks for public view. Illinois Senator Stephan A. Douglas' oft-quoted

SUMNER was well and elegantly whipped, and he richly deserved it.

—*Charleston, South Carolina, Mercury (Democratic), (28 May, 1856)*

remark may be more telling as it seems to have been impromptu. "Is it his object to provoke some of us to kick him as we would a dog in the street, that he may get sympathy upon the just chastisement?" Just as memorable, but certainly not as accurate was Senator Lewis Cass' description of the speech as: "the most un-American and unpatriotic that ever grated on the ears of the members of this high body...."¹ They disputed every particular just as they berated the speaker. In as much as Sumner had

his defenders that day as well, the Senate's stated reactions matched the public reactions.

Not surprisingly from this combination of fierce rhetoric and literary allusions, the Bay State's senior senator was an abolitionist

The member from South Carolina transgressed every rule of honor which should animate or restrain one gentleman in his connections with another, in his ruffian assault upon Mr. Sumner. There is no chivalry in a brute. There is no manliness in a scoundrel.

—*Boston, Massachusetts, Courier (Whig), 23 May, 1856)*

with a scholarly bent. The son of a minister who died when he was young, he attended private schools in Boston on scholarship. He then attended Harvard College, then Harvard

tasks of a knight of old, he donned ancient armor, went in search of noble quests, and chose as the lady he would champion a barmaid by the name of Dulcinea. In Sumner's rendering,

It was a speech full of abuse of his brother Senators—full of the vilest and most dangerous appeals against the institutions of the South, and calculated only to increase the strife between the two sections and lead to disunion and civil war.

—*Raleigh, North Carolina, Standard (Democratic), (28 May, 1856)*

Law School where he apprenticed himself to the great judicial writer and former U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Joseph Story. Sumner was disappointed not to receive an academic appointment at Harvard, but managed to find a career for himself in his own Quixotic quest for higher causes. His idealism, pacifism, and strident morality gained him both acclaim and disparagement. He ardently advocated for all his causes: besides abolition of slavery, prison reform, the peace movement, and civil rights for people of all backgrounds and races. In short, he was a very peculiar politician.

Sumner's first successful run for office was more a farce than a triumph. Due to the divisions in Massachusetts with the rise of the American Party, derogatorily known as the "Know Nothings" after their anti-immigrant, secret society origins, the Massachusetts legislature was split among the Know Nothings, the Democrats, and the Whigs in 1850. Sumner arranged with a coalition of Know Nothings and Democrats to have him selected as senator. The coalition soon faltered, but Sumner was safely ensconced in the senate for his six year term. While there he did little of any importance except give the occasional oration on the evils of slavery and give offense to most of his colleagues. Belonging to no party until he joined the unpopular, minority Republicans, it is unlikely Sumner could have played a substantial legislative part in any event, but his uncompromising abrasiveness did not help.

Instead, he took advantage of the senate's traditional respect for orations to deliver a series of speeches against the expansion of slavery to the western territories. Sumner was not seeking to convince his colleagues to vote one way or another. He had a much broader, remote audience in mind. Reporters took notes from the galleries of the chamber. Every spoken word made it into the *Congressional Globe*, which could be sent free of charge—franked—to would-be readers far and wide. In

a sense, Sumner used the senate as a gigantic amplification chamber. He was one of the first, but by no means the last, to make a case before the nation using senatorial privilege as his mechanism. It was not long before his fervency created trouble for him.

Sumner's "Crime Against Kansas" speech was not the first of his speeches to garner unpleasant attention. After his remarks on the Anthony Burns incident, Senators Butler and James Mason of Virginia took him to task for defending the Boston, Massachusetts, crowds that had set upon federal marshals who were escorting the alleged fugitive slave back to slavery. These verbal tussles degenerated into fierce exchanges about the abolitionists' adherence to the dictates of federal law. The fierceness of their remarks showed the already fraying relationships between Northerners and Southerners even in the normally courteous, reserved senate.

In a prior incident in 1854, Butler responded in kind to Sumner's dispositions. But, in taking his rhetoric to another level, he set the stage for later events. Instead of merely defending his section against Sumner's assertions, Butler decided to lambaste the social statistics of the North, its morals compared to those of the founding

generation, and the "cankers" of its society in the form of prohibition, abolitionism, and women "who step from the sphere proscribed to them by God, to enter into the political arena, and claim the rights of men."² It was one thing to defend slavery. It was another to call into question the values of another section and Massachusetts in particular. Sumner had succeeded in goading Butler into a sectional attack, rather than a mere defense. It was another example of how abolitionists encouraged defenders of slavery to go to extremes.

A few days later, Senator Stephen A. Douglas also sparred with Sumner, but with more aplomb than Butler. Douglas referred to the difficulty of Sumner's election and the coalition of Democrats and Free Soilers that made it happen as akin to a "larceny" and his subsequent

For the first time the extreme discipline of the Plantation has been introduced into the Senate of the United States.

—*Albany, New York, Evening Journal (Republican), (23 May, 1856)*

▼ **Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas** (1813-1861) famously declared that he did not care whether slavery was voted up or down. He accused Sumner and his fellow Republicans of being "the pure unadulterated representatives of Abolitionism, Free Soilism, Niggerism in the Congress of the United States."



The mouths of the representatives of the north are to be closed by the use of bowie-knives, bludgeons, and revolvers.

—Boston, Massachusetts, *Atlas (Republican)*, (23 May, 1856)

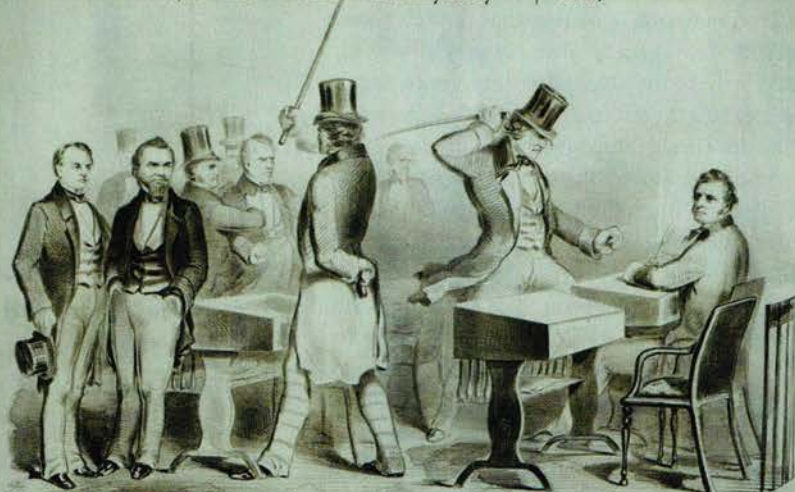


▲ **Preston S. Brooks** (1819-1857) came from a very different society from that of Sumner's Massachusetts, one in which the honor code was central. In the aftermath of the attack on Sumner, South Carolinians sent Brooks dozens of canes, one bearing the inscription "Good Job." The *Richmond Enquirer* crowed: "We consider the act good in conception, better in execution, and best of all in consequences." However, Brooks's action was regarded in the North as that of a cowardly barbarian.

▼ In this Winslow Homer (1836-1910) lithograph entitled "Arguments of the Chivalry," Congressman Laurence Keitt, a pistol on his left hand, prevents anyone from interfering with Brooks's assault on Sumner. (And some do not seem inclined to do so in any case!)

the ninety-sixth of Edgefield County, "Fighting Edgefield," became the center point for South Carolina politics as the population shifted to the interior. At the same time, more so than any other area in South Carolina, perhaps the entire South, this district gained a reputation for duels, eye-gouging, and violence. In a moral pamphlet about a wife who had killed three of her husbands that he wrote while there as a minister, *The Devil in Petticoats*, Parson Mason L. Weems, whose fanciful biography of George Washington told the tale of the cherry tree, remarked: "Oh mercy!...Another murder in Edgefield. For sure it must be pandemonium itself, a very district of Devils!"⁵⁵ Preston Brooks was born there on August 5, 1819.

Despite the fact that South Carolina had outlawed the practice, features of the honor culture like dueling remained a part of South Carolinian life, as Brooks's history of duels shows. Linked to one's public reputation, honor was more than just manliness, character, and position in society. It undergirded everything that made you who you were from your credit-worthiness—a critical item in an economy built on debt—to your social life. Men like Andrew Jackson and Sam Houston had to flee their homes in South Carolina and Tennessee, respectively, when their honor was impinged. For Jackson it was business failures; for Houston it was a mystery



We believe there are some kinds of slander and abuse, for the perpetration of which, no office or station should protect a man from deserved punishment.

—Milledgeville, Georgia, *Federal Union (Democratic)*, (3 June, 1856)

reception in the Senate due to the "dishonorable and corrupt means" by which he had received the office.³ It was not the first time a senator replied to Sumner with an attack on his character. Douglas himself had accused Sumner and his fellow Republicans of being "the pure, unadulterated representatives of Abolitionism, Free Soilism, Niggerism in the Congress of the United States."⁴ It also denoted the strong feelings Sumner elicited in his opponents, whether Northerner or Southerner.

Brooks had come from a very different place than Sumner's Massachusetts. He was as unlikely to receive Sumner's speech well as anyone outside of the North. To be precise, South Carolina's

origins, make-up, and history gave Brooks a starkly contrasting view of nation, politics, and civilization. At least in part this was a result of plain-as-day demographics. In many respects his state was not a slaveholding society, but a slave society. Since the early eighteenth century, slaves were the majority of the population and everything in the Palmetto State revolved around that commitment to and inescapable trap of human bondage. Through this extreme version of slavery, the society itself became the home to extreme positions regarding what many termed "the peculiar institution."

By the time of the American Revolution, like Virginia to the north, South Carolina could boast a gentry and a society that was among the wealthiest in the English-speaking world, and, thus, some of the most prosperous on the planet. Like feudal lords of old, but with values and culture derived from Enlightenment Englishmen, the planter class as well as the much larger group of farmers who owned only a few slaves acted, considered themselves, and expected to be treated as gentlemen. But, the South Carolina that constituted one of the leading states of the union was not simply the rice plantations of the low country and the colonial capital and port of Charleston. South Carolina was much more diverse than that.

Interestingly, one district in South Carolina,



▲ Another depiction of the assault.

relating to his new wife. Because of its centrality to life in the South, and South Carolina especially, we cannot discount the honor culture's effect on every southern gentleman's world view, including that of Preston S. Brooks.

Codified after a fashion in an Irish document, and subsequently in a South Carolina version, the so-called Code Duello that motivated Brooks demanded strict adherence if it were to perform its function of resolving disputes. It was not a bloodthirsty document, preferring instead to offer several ways for honor to be satisfied rather than the proverbial pistols at dawn. Each party had seconds who were to perform the intermediary functions necessary to the procedure for challenging, offering solutions, and, if necessary, making the final arrangements for the encounter. As the author of the definitive version for South Carolina wrote, "I believe that nine duels out of ten, if not ninety-nine out of a hundred, originate in the want of experience in the seconds."⁶ At all times, parties were to respect one another and presume a form of equality. It is not hard to see in these exchanges of notes, charges, countercharges, and negotiations a legalistic society in microcosm. Perfectly suited for the notoriously litigious American market, it is a wonder it took until the 1830s to reach the United States in published form.

Of course, this begs the question: why, then, did Preston Brooks not issue a challenge under the rules of the Code Duello? In short, according to his testimony at his subsequent trial and a Congressional investigation, he did

not believe a man like Charles Sumner would accept one. Under the circumstances, it is quite likely Sumner would have refused. Dueling had long been outlawed in Washington, D.C., as it had almost everywhere. Northerners were quite open about their contempt for what many considered a barbaric practice.

But, was Brooks being honest about this explanation? He had thought a great deal about the encounter. He also testified to wanting to treat Sumner appropriately. Thrashing someone was reserved for an inferior. One whipped a slave for disobedience, and hit a slave for disrespectful speech. Punishing someone like a child across the knee was commonly practiced and thrashing someone with a cane was fairly close. But, Sumner's surprise and Brooks's adoption of this method of redress also denoted a vast gulf between the Massachusetts senator and the representative from the Edgefield district of South Carolina.

Another explanation for South Carolina and Brooks's combative stance rests on the Spartan-like quality of the state by the early 1850s. It is not hard to understand why the founding colony of the lower South armed all of its free white males and mandated militia service. Nor is it unfathomable why every man capable of bearing arms would have to gain a working knowledge of military affairs, even far more than the dilapidated militias of most of the northern states. When a master class is sitting on the powder keg of an enslaved African-American majority, they might well choose the Spartan solution to their enslaved helots: a commitment to the ways of soldiering and slave patrols.

Major flaws in the U.S. Constitution that left the issue of slavery's legal status uncertain also interacted with these cultural differences in dangerous ways as the populations of the free states and slave states, and as a result also their

The most serious offense committed in the American Senate, and one which must be promptly rebuked, is the slanderous and dastardly attack upon the South and one of her proudest patriots, by Sumner, the abolitionist leader in that Senate.

—Austin, Texas, *State Gazette (Democratic)*, (14 June, 1856)

How long will the people of the Free States tamely submit to such outrages? —Portland, Maine, Advertiser (Republican), 23 May, 1856

politicians, clashed over whether slavery should expand into new territories. The issue did not emerge virulently with regard to the Northwest Territory and the old Southwest because those areas offset one another, the South was dominant in national affairs, and the fate of those regions rested on deals made prior to the Constitution's enactment. The first strident debate emerged during the closing years of the so-called Era of Good Feelings, when James Monroe's National Republicans were everywhere triumphant and willing to give concessions to their defeated foes in a spirit of magnanimity. When it did erupt, it began a long, fractious, and complicated contest over the expansion of slavery in which Sumner's speeches and Brooks's actions formed but one part.

The only men in South Carolina who gave their efforts to the country in the Revolutionary war, were poor men, and poor men in South Carolina at this time are denied the right of suffrage, and are incapable of holding office.

—Springfield, Illinois, State Journal (Republican), (5 June, 1956)

After the assault on May 22, 1856, both of the protagonists were tried in several forums at the same time: before the Congress, in the court of public opinion, and, in Brooks' case alone, in criminal court. The verdict depended on the forum. Different rules applied in each, but regardless of the differences each has something to tell us not only about the incident itself, but also the nature of the Congress, the public, and the criminal courts. The United States was in the midst of a tremendous transition in all of these realms. How they dealt with this incident indicates a little of the nature of that transformation.

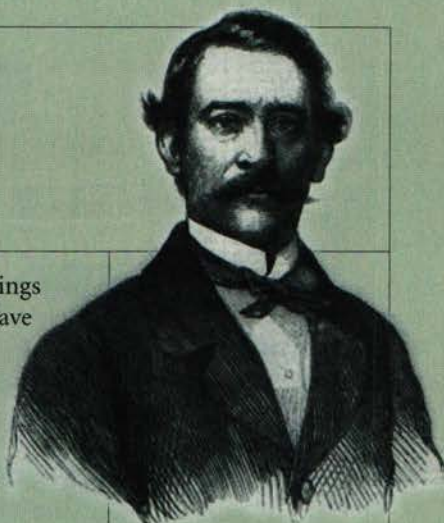
The Congress, in the form of the House of Representatives, found Brooks guilty of the assault and condemned it in no uncertain terms, but did not have the two-thirds majority necessary to expel Brooks and his associate, the fire-eater Lawrence Keitt, also of South Carolina. The fact that the vote had been largely on party and sectional lines mitigated the effect of that determination. The court had also found Brooks guilty, but only of a minor infraction and

with a fairly light punishment. Its workings convinced many in the North that the slave power extended to the courts of law, or rather provided additional evidence of that fact. What might have come as a shock was how lenient it was toward violence and, as such, Northerners were not safe in the nation's capital, being as it was in the South. The court of public opinion as demonstrated in the newspapers, rallies, and expressions of sympathy or support was similarly divided. Both areas of the country reacted to the news. Both areas saw the other's reaction. Both reacted to that reaction.

The nature of the venues affected the portrayal of the assault in different ways. The two committees of the Congress that were involved in the investigation reflected the political make-up of each house as well as the rules of each. The Senate's inquiry was the result of Democratic domination and its more deliberative, cautious, and judicious understandings of its own authority. The House committee and the House's actions were the

result of Republican and American Party preponderance plus the House's ability to carry through with the will of its majority. Both houses were interpreting law in order to reach their respective conclusions. The issues were questions of free speech, personal liberty, and whether the House had the authority to act in such a case. They created legal records according to the rules of court-like proceedings, and deliberated as a jury might, based on that evidence.

Brooks's trial in criminal court in D.C. for assault was a legal proceeding in all respects. But, this did not mean it operated out of its political, social, and cultural context. The judge and prosecutor were Democrats appointed by Democratic presidents. Their decisions



▲ Immediately after his arrest, Brooks was freed on bail of five hundred dollars. But the grand jury indicted him, and he faced a bench trial (no jury) before Judge Thomas H. Crawford of the Circuit Court for the District of Columbia. Fortunately for Brooks, Thomas was a "doughface"—a southern-leaning northerner. Brooks was fortunate also in the person of the prosecutor, the U.S. Attorney for Washington, none other than the "dashing, womanizing, states' rights Democratic darling of Washington" (and nephew by marriage of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney), Philip Barton Key. It was Key (above), later to be shot dead by Congressman Daniel Sickles for having an affair with his wife, who decided to charge Brooks with only a minor offense.

We have borne insult long enough, and now let the conflict come if it must.

—Edgefield, South Carolina, Advertiser (Democratic), (28 May, 1956)



reflected not just the law in the case, but their own concepts of what was appropriate. These concepts stemmed from their personal understandings of the severity of the crime, influenced by their sympathies and self-interest. Brooks's defense was targeted for this soft-underbelly of the law. He appealed to notions of justice present in the common law, in the community in which he stood, which also happened to share aspects of the legal culture in which he was raised, trained, and practiced as an attorney. While we cannot peer into presiding Judge Crawford's mind, we can interpret his decision in the light of these circumstances. Despite the testimony of eyewitnesses that showed a dangerous, premeditated attack upon a vulnerable victim, largely without warning, Brooks was held to be responsible only for a minor infraction. He walked free after paying a substantial fine.

Public opinion was also the result of politics, culture, and society. It was not just the newspapers' need to sell copies, but their desire to reach their readership, mold opinion, and serve their notion of the republic. In the imperfect realm of knowledge that is the world of the mass media, there were constraints on their ability to convey nuances, the countervailing forces within law and politics, and the hidden motives behind the primary actors in this drama. Our interpretation of the inflammatory editorials, pictures, and sensationalist news items is colored by our view of the media's purpose as well as the outcome of this sequence of events, the Civil War. One of the nation's first mass media circuses played a critical role in magnifying and sustaining the controversy.

However, we do not just care about the caning's immediate impact on events. There is still a great deal of history between May 22, 1856, and April 1861 when the first shots of the Civil War resounded. The question remains whether the caning merely grabbed headlines and occupied Congress briefly or had a long-term influence on the events that followed. The

Mr. Brooks of S.C., has been burned in effigy at Cambridge, Mass..

—Baltimore, Maryland, *Sun (American)*, (3 June 1856)

◀ The Old Senate Chamber.



▲ South Carolinian congressman Laurence Keitt (1824-1864) was a noted "firebrand" who aided Brooks in his assault on Sumner, by threatening with a pistol those who tried to assist the bleeding senator. Censored by the House, like Brooks he resigned his seat and was overwhelmingly reelected by his constituents the following month. Keitt, a noted brawler, may well have been instrumental in Brooks's decision to assault Sumner. He was killed at Cold Harbor while commanding Kershaw's Brigade.

most prominent domino in the sequence to fall next was the fall elections of 1856.

It is difficult to extract such an event from the chain of history. Certainly, the election of 1856 would have been very different without the media sensation that was the caning immediately preceding it. Would the Republicans have emerged as a legitimate national party, at least in the free states, without it? What was the power of Sumner's "empty chair" as he recovered from the assault? Certainly, Sumner's martyrdom played a considerable role in his own reelection, much less that of other similarly situated Republicans. John Brown and the Pottawatomie Rifles also took it quite seriously, if the later testimony is to be believed about it causing the Pottawatomie massacre. Without 1856 could the Republicans have been in a position to benefit from Lecompton, the recession after 1857, or, even, the fervency of many Southerners after Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry? At first glance the caning seems to have been a critical early piece in the falling dominoes that led to the Civil War.

On the other hand, there were so many clashes between the North and the South over slavery, who can declare with certainty that, without the caning, there would not have been some other clash between North and South that would have crystallized northern and southern opinion? Members were already issuing each other challenges, carrying arms to the capitol, and fighting with one another on the floor of the House before the caning as well as after. Were not the differences between North and South so heated, so fervent, so great as to constitute in Seward's words and Abraham Lincoln's thought "an irrepressible conflict"?

Viewed within its context, the caning rises above being a mere domino in the events leading up to the Civil War. It tells us a great deal about the cut and thrust of politics. It illuminates the transformation of American society, media, and

If Southern men will resort to the fist to overawe and intimidate Northern men, blow must be given back for blow. Forbearance and kindly deportment are lost on these Southern ruffians.

—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, *Gazette (Republican)*, (24 May, 1856)

The South certainly has become generally convinced that it is by hard blows, and not by loud blustering and insulting denunciation, that the sectional quarrel is to be settled.

—Charleston, South Carolina, *Mercury (Democratic)*, (30 May, 1856)

No meaner exhibition of Southern cowardice—generally miscalled Southern chivalry—was ever witnessed.

—New York, *Tribune (Republican)*, (23 May, 1856)

culture into modernity. It reminds us of the basic humanity of those remote political figures whose decisions shaped the course of the nation. It points out the landscape of the law in both the courts and lawmaking bodies. It gives us a revealing look into the concepts of honor that continue to influence us today. It serves as a warning about how our words and deeds can have great consequences. Finally, it places us on notice about the notions of both contingency and inevitability in history. We should not overlook either the big or the small regarding that minute or so on the floor of the Senate chamber that May 22 in 1856.

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Endnotes

1. *Congressional Globe*, 34th Cong., 1st Sess., Appendix, 545, 544.
2. Andrew P. Butler, "Senator Andrew Butler's Speech on the Nebraska Bill, 24-25 February 1854," *The Caning of Senator Sumner*, T. Lloyd Benson, ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2004), 52-3.
3. "Nebraska Bill Debates, 3 March 1854," *The Caning*, 55.
4. *Congressional Globe*, 33rd Cong., 1st Session, 282, as quoted in David Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 253.
5. Mason Locke Weems, *The Devil In Petticoats, Or, God's Revenge Against Husband Killing* ([1816] reprinted Edgefield, S.C.: Bacon and Adams, 1878), 3.
6. John Lyde Wilson, *The Code of Honor; or Rules for the Government of Principals and Seconds in Dueling* (Charleston, South Carolina: James Phinney), 1858, 10.

He was abusive of Judge BUTLER and Judge DOUGLAS, and denounced all slaveholders as criminals!

—Greenville, South Carolina, *Patriot and Mountaineer (Democratic)*, (29 May, 1856)

(continued from page 11)

Naturally, trains built for 5' gauge could not operate on 4' 8" track, and so forth. Worse, even where track gauge differences were not an issue, even at places where several lines converged, such as Grand Junction, Chattanooga, or Atlanta, there were rarely links between lines, so passengers and goods had to be offloaded at one station, and transferred by coach or street car or dray across town, and then reloaded on the cars of the "intersecting" line. Moreover, North or South, but especially in the latter, most lines were single track. Although there were usually sidings, where one train could wait while another passed in the opposite direction, or short stretches of double tracked line so that trains could pass each other without one having to stop, traffic was naturally restricted; the Memphis & Charleston, for example, ran only one through train in each direction every day, one eastbound from Memphis starting very early in the

morning, and a westbound night train from Charleston. And speeds were low, as the quality of track, North and South, was generally poor. Although some lines used solid iron rails of 65 weight (pounds to the yard), many used "strap iron" rails, wooden beams overlaid with about an inch of iron, of 15 weight. The ballasting (gravel bedding) on most lines was rather light, and some lacked ballast completely, the ties being laid directly on the ground. Although the national rail speed record seems to have been 40 miles per hour, set in 1860 on Missouri's Hannibal & St. Joseph, few runs ever came close to that, 25 miles per hour was more normally the upper limit on the best lines, and many ran at only 10 to 15 miles per hour.

By the way, in case anyone is wondering why Davis had not taken the Vicksburg & Meridian to its terminus, at Meridian, and then traveled overland to Montgomery by fast coach, at best the coach ride would have been a bone-

shaking, nerve racking journey of about three days to cover the 160 or so miles, during which he would not have been able to do any work nor get any rest.

So even though the South had a poor railroad system, what it did have still constituted an immensely valuable strategic resource.

—With a tip 'o the cap to Lynda Crist, co-editor, *The Jefferson Davis Papers*, and Bob Nelson, Gregory Rice, and Steve Alvin

Note: Information about Davis' trip is surprisingly sparse. There seems to be no explanation for the absence of a verbatim account of any of the speeches he made along the way. His arrival at and departure from various places is largely unrecorded, requiring resort to contemporary railroad timetables in order to provide some estimate of the time spent en route, including the many stops. Even when some record exists as to the time he left or arrived at a particular place, standard time did not exist, making it difficult to calculate the time spent on the various legs of his journey.



Ethan S. Rafuse, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College

“A Scene So Terrible and Yet So Grand”

The Fight for Fairview and Chancellorsville, May 3, 1863



► Lee and his troops at Chancellorsville, by H.A. Ogden.



What would go down in history as the Chancellorsville Campaign was far from over when a badly wounded Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson left the field late on May 2, 1863. Just a few days earlier, Army of the Potomac commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker crowed he had placed Gen. Robert E. Lee's army in a position from which it "must ingloriously fly or come out from behind entrenchments and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits."¹ While Lee had managed to find a third option on May 2, sending Jackson on the great flank march that culminated in the rout of a Union corps west of Chancellorsville, the Federals rallied quickly from that setback and night fell too soon for Jackson to accomplish more that day. Thus, as May 2 ended the Confederate high command could not avoid the fact that its choices were now limited to those Hooker had spelled out. Lee was not about to ingloriously fly; so that left the second, decidedly unpromising, option of resuming the offensive against Hooker's army on its "own ground." Thus, the stage was set for one of the most brutal fights of the entire Civil War.²

With the wounding of Jackson and his senior division commander, Maj. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill, during the night of May 2-3 command of the three Confederate infantry divisions west of Chancellorsville ultimately came to rest in the hands of cavalryman Maj. Gen. James E. B. Stuart. The situation when Stuart took command was far from ideal. Not only was he commanding a significant body of infantry for the first time (which seems to have inspired surprisingly little concern among the men he was to command), but as a consequence of the events of May 2, the Army of Northern Virginia held positions that conformed roughly to a large Union salient around the Chancellor House and Fairview Cemetery. A smaller Federal salient extended forward from this position to incorporate

into the Union line a piece of cleared high ground known as Hazel Grove, which was interposed between Stuart's approximately 32,000-man command and the divisions of Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson and Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws (about 15,000 men) that were operating under Lee's direct supervision.³

The night before, Jackson had been wounded searching for some way to cut the Federals off from the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers—the only move that held out any prospect for bringing about the destruction of Hooker's army. If Stuart was to reach a position from which he might cut Hooker off from the Rapidan and Rappahannock on May 3, though, he would have to move his command to the left. To do this would pull Stuart away from the rest of the Confederate army, though, leaving Anderson and McLaws grossly outmatched. Moreover, only a unified Army of Northern Virginia could deliver a truly decisive blow against Hooker's powerful army. Consequently, determining that his first priority was the reunification of his army, during the early morning of May 3 Lee sent two messages to Stuart instructing him to conduct his operations that day in line with the objective of "dispossessing" the Federals "of Chancellorsville, which will permit the union of the whole army. . . . It is all-important that you still continue pressing to the right. . . . [P]ress on, on the general plan, which is to work by the right wing, turning the positions of the enemy so as to drive him from Chancellorsville, which will again unite us. Everything will be done on this side to accomplish the same object."⁴

Meanwhile, on the other side of the field, Hooker's men were actively preparing for the moment when Lee proved the prescience of their commander's earlier prediction that the enemy would be forced to "give us battle on our own ground." True, the events of May 2 had significantly altered the particular ground on which the Feder-

als stood, but it was still good for fighting the sort of battle Hooker planned to fight on May 3. West and southwest of his headquarters at the Chancellor House, Hooker had two divisions holding good positions on either side of the Orange Plank Road. The division on the right was commanded by Maj. Gen. Hiram G. Berry and was not only part of the Third Corps, whose commander Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Sickles was Hooker's closest subordinate officer, but had the added virtue in Hooker's eyes of having once been commanded by himself.⁵

Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams's division from Maj. Gen. Henry Slocum's Twelfth Corps extended the Union line southward, with two regiments from Col. Samuel Ross's brigade, the 3rd Maryland and 123rd New York, connecting with Berry's right at the Orange Plank Road. Brig. Gen. Thomas Ruger's brigade was next in line, with three regiments posted in the front line facing west and two in reserve. The Union line then made a sharp, left turn to the east with Ross's other two regiments, the 20th Connecticut and 145th New York, facing south and connecting with Ruger's left and the right of Brig. Gen. John W. Geary's Twelfth Corps division. Geary's division then extended the line until it connected with Maj. Gen. Darius Couch's Second Corps, which held the section of the Union line east of the Chancellor House.⁶

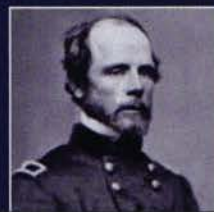
Also standing between Stuart and Chancellorsville that morning were two strong lines of fortifications. The western line had been constructed



◀ Former midshipman Charles Graham ended the war as commander of the "Naval Brigade" on the James River.



◀ General Sickles calmly smoked a cigar and strolled among his men as a firestorm swept his position.



◀ Major General Darius N. Couch (1822-1897) took command of the army after Hooker was injured.

by Slocum's corps after its arrival at Chancellorsville on April 30 and ran approximately a thousand yards from Hazel Grove to north of the Orange Plank Road. These had been given up by the Federals on the second, but by dawn on May 3 Berry's and Williams's men had constructed a second line of log and dirt works a few hundred yards east of the first one. This eastern line crossed the Orange Plank Road approximately three-quarters of a mile west of Chancellorsville and in front of the works the Federals cleared a space of at least 50 yards in the woods to give themselves better fields of fire and laid down a heavy abatis of brush and fallen trees. In addition, a few hundred yards behind the second line of works, Union artillery was massed on the high open ground at Fairview under the direction of Captain Clermont Best.⁷

As if this were not enough, Hooker also had three other corps nearby. North and east of Chancellorsville, the Eleventh Corps was recuperating from its May 2 ordeal and connecting the Second Corps's left with the Rappahannock River. The Fifth Corps's position loosely connected with the right of Berry's division and ran along the Ely's Ford Road to Little Hunting

Run, at which point the Union line bent back with the First Corps posted along the run and connecting with the Rappahannock. In all, Hooker had about 80,000 men with him around Chancellorsville, of which about 50,000 occupied the area around Fairview and Chancellorsville.⁸

Nonetheless, the Federal commander was thinking defensively. He had dispatched instructions to Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick, who had four divisions at Fredericksburg, to "push through every obstacle in your path" and march west toward Chancellorsville. While Sedgwick did this, Hooker could safely assume Lee would resume his offensive and that his own best course would be to fight a defensive battle around Fairview and Chancellorsville.⁹ Lee might gain ground in the course of his attacks, but, by taking advantage of the depth of their position and fortified defenses, the Federals could make the rebels pay a price for every inch of ground that was well beyond its worth. In the process, they would grind the Confederate army down so that it would be in an exceedingly precarious condition when Sedgwick's command arrived from Fredericksburg.

Although his usual confident self as dawn approached on May 3, Hooker was concerned about one section of his line. This was the Hazel Grove salient just south and west of Wil-

liams's position, which was occupied by thirty-eight pieces of artillery and two divisions of Sickles's corps. It was this salient that separated Stuart's command from the rest of the Confederate army. Hooker, however, decided that he preferred a more compact line. Consequently, he ordered Sickles to abandon Hazel Grove and pull back within the defensive perimeter formed by Berry's, Williams's, Geary's, and Couch's men. In doing so, Hooker generously set in motion the removal of a major obstacle to the reunification of the Army of Northern Virginia around Chancellorsville on May 3.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Lee and his men were in for a very tough fight that morning.

As he and his comrades in Ross's brigade prepared for action, a soldier in 123rd New York lay down at around 5 a.m. to eat his breakfast. Facing east, he witnessed a veritable beehive of activity between his position and the Chancellor House as Best and his artilleryists prepared for action. Then, he turned his eyes skyward and, "saw in the east the sun just coming over the forest. Never was there a more beautiful sunrise, not a cloud in the sky. It was an ideal Sunday morning, warm and fair. It seemed to me like sacrilege that such a sacred day should be used by men to kill and maim each other."¹¹

A few hundred yards away, Sickles had just begun moving his men back from Hazel Grove. He had yet to complete this task when Stuart's command moved forward to open the morning's battle. In part because it had not been heavily engaged the previous day, Stuart selected A.P. Hill's division, now commanded by Brig. Gen. Henry Heth, to lead the attack. Brig. Gen. Raleigh Colston's division would follow Heth and Brig. Gen. Robert Rodes's division, which had been the most heavily engaged the day before, would form the



◀ Major General Joseph Hooker.



◀ Edwin Forbes' sketch of Union soldiers digging in on the second line of defense.

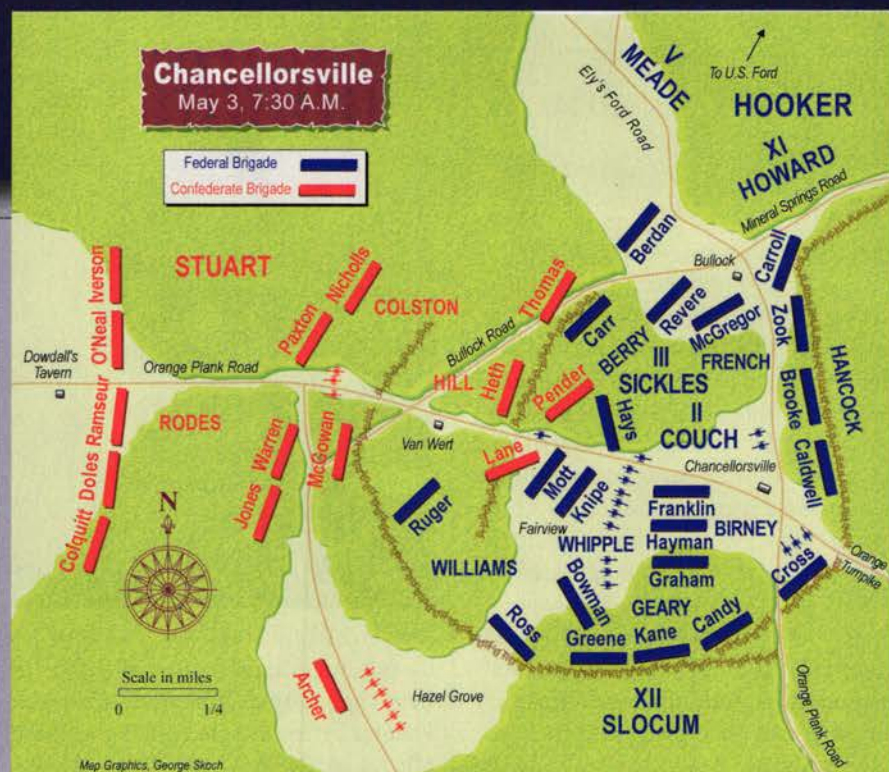


third of Stuart's lines.¹² Because of the dispositions of the two armies, there would be little opportunity for strategy or finesse for the Army of Northern Virginia this Sunday morning, just a straightforward attack to "dispossess" the Federals of Fairview and Chancellorsville.

Perhaps the most critical task was assigned to the brigade of Tennesseans and Alabamians commanded by Brig. Gen. James Archer. It was the rightmost of Heth's six brigades and had responsibility for seizing Hazel Grove and making possible the reunification of the Army of Northern Virginia. Fortunately for Archer, who in the course of his advance through the Wilderness lost connection with the brigade on his left and thus advanced with both flanks exposed, his command did not encounter much resistance in its advance against Hazel Grove. The battle began for Archer between five and six a.m., he cried out to his men "Fix bayonets!" Forward, guide center! Charge 'em boys!"¹³

As his Tennesseans advanced through what one man described as "a dense jungle" toward Hazel Grove, they began taking fire from an Ohio battery that, along with a brigade from Birney's division commanded by Brig. Gen. Charles Graham, were the rear guard of the force from Sickles's corps that was evacuating Hazel Grove. Archer's 1,400 men surged forward to the clearing on Hazel Grove, their advance facilitated by the assistance they received from two batteries that Confederate artilleryist Col. E. Porter Alexander had managed to post in a good position from which to support their efforts. They attacked Graham's Pennsylvanians and, although the Federals were able to maintain order as they fell back from Hazel Grove, were able to capture four Union guns.¹⁴

As Graham's men fell back toward Fairview with more haste than originally planned, Archer's command claimed possession of Hazel Grove. Archer then tried to halt his command in order to reform his lines, but demonstrating



in the words of one man that "[w]hen on a charge Tennesseans haven't got a bit of sense" the men continued pushing forward in pursuit of the Federals. Archer, upon catching sight of a line of enemy troops posted behind breastworks, yielded to the impulses of his men and ordered them to charge.¹⁵

This section of the Union line was held the two southward facing regiments from Ross's brigade, who received plenty of warning from their skirmishers, who cried out as they passed over the log barricades: "Get ready, boys, for they are coming and coming strong." The men of Ross's two regiments, Maj. Philo Buckingham of the 20th Connecticut wrote afterward, then "waited with great coolness the approach of the enemy, who came up yelling like fiends." Told to hold their fire until certain of a good shot, the men of the 123rd New York watched as Archer's men were about 200 yards away, at which point Federal artillery opened fire with their rounds, one of Ross's men later recalled, "pass[ing] about fifteen feet over our heads and the shells exploded only a short distance beyond." Nonetheless, Archer's men kept coming. Their first volley, however, was poorly timed and largely went over the heads of Ross's men. The Federal infantry then opened a blistering fire,

and as Archer's line recoiled from the shock, it was to the sound of a "Yankee shout and hurrah." The Tennesseans recovered and managed to resume their advance but Ross's men then proceeded to put up such stiff resistance from behind their barricades that after a brief fire fight Archer concluded he had no choice but to pull back to Hazel Grove.¹⁶

While Archer was seizing Hazel Grove and engaging Ross's Federals, the brigade to his left, Brig. Gen. Samuel McGowan's, likewise advanced unsupported on either flank, enjoyed an initial easy success, and then found itself in a more difficult fight. The first Federals McGowan's South Carolinians encountered were, much as Graham's men had been, in the process of pulling back toward Fairview and easily overrun, with about a hundred falling prisoner. As they continued their advance east, though, McGowan's men soon found the going much, much tougher.¹⁷

Their problems began when, after advancing through "a close, rough growth of pines, swamp trees and vines," they reached the base of a small, cleared elevation, at the top of which Ruger's brigade, supported by two guns, was posted. The South Carolinians found the Federals more than ready for them, for they had yelled as they ad-

vanced through the woods, which one man later complained, “discovered us to the enemy, when we might have remained concealed.” As the South Carolinians pushed to the top of the rise, Ruger’s men unleashed a ferocious series of volleys that slowed the Confederate advance and then brought it to a halt. McGowan’s men responded by opening fire and for about a half hour the two sides engaged in a fierce firefight, which came to an end when some of Ruger’s men worked their way into the gap between McGowan’s and Archer’s brigades to a position from which they could attack McGowan’s right flank. Taking fearful punishment in front and now threatened with envelopment, the two regiments on McGowan’s right had no choice but to fall back. The rest of the brigade followed shortly thereafter and soon McGowan’s command was taking refuge behind the western line of entrenchments the Federals had built. There, while standing on the works rallying his men, McGowan was shot in the leg and forced to turn command over to Col. Oliver Edwards, who shortly thereafter was mortally wounded.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Berry’s division, assisted by two regiments from Williams’s division and a brigade from the Second Corps, was contending with the brigades Heth had pushed forward along and north of the Orange Plank Road. Just south of the road, the North Carolinians of Brig. Gen. James H. Lane’s brigade (whose trigger fingers the previous evening were responsible for Stonewall Jackson’s wounding), drove



◀ The mortal wounding of Major-General Hiram G. Berry (1824-1863) nearly had catastrophic consequences for the Union army.

forward like a tidal wave, supported by two regiments from Col. John M. Brockenbrough’s brigade. Even the Federal artillerists at Fairview, whose efforts led Heth to proclaim, “I cannot conceive of any body of men ever being subjected to a more galling fire”, were unable to arrest the momentum of Lane’s advance. Screaming the rebel yell, the North Carolinians quickly overran the fortified position south of the Plank Road held by the 3rd Maryland. The North Carolinians then trained their fire on a two-gun section of artillery and forced its crews to abandon one of the guns.¹⁹

Meanwhile, with the assistance of the rest of Brockenbrough’s brigade, Brig. Gen. William Dorsey Pender’s brigade of North Carolinians not only pushed back the Federals north of the Plank Road but managed to capture Brig. Gen. William Hays, whose brigade from the Second Corps had been sent to Berry’s support and ended up being captured when he was unable to extricate himself from his horse after it was knocked over in the course of the

fighting. It took some time for Hays’s second in command to receive word of what had happened and by the time he did, one man later wrote, “each Colonel [had] ordered his regiment out of the difficulty as he might be able.” Then, to make matters worse, General Berry fell mortally wounded while attempting to cross the Plank Road. Hooker was devastated and upon arriving on the scene to see his comrade’s prostrate body, cried out, “My God Berry, why was this to happen? Why was the man on whom I relied on so much to be taken away in this manner?”²⁰

Berry’s death nearly had catastrophic consequences beyond the anguish it caused for General Hooker. Brig. Gen. Joseph Revere decided shortly after learning of Berry’s wounding that he now had the authority to act on his desire to pull his six regiments out of line to resupply and feed them. Prior to this, the northernmost of Heth’s brigades, Brig. Gen. Edward L. Thomas’s, had been trying without success to break or work around the northern flank of Berry’s position. Revere’s actions made Thomas’s task immeasurably easier and created a serious crisis for the Union high command, as Thomas’s Georgians moved to take advantage of the situation and by doing so threatened to roll up the entire Union line west of the Chancellor House.²¹

Upon learning what had happened, Hooker responded by directing Brig.

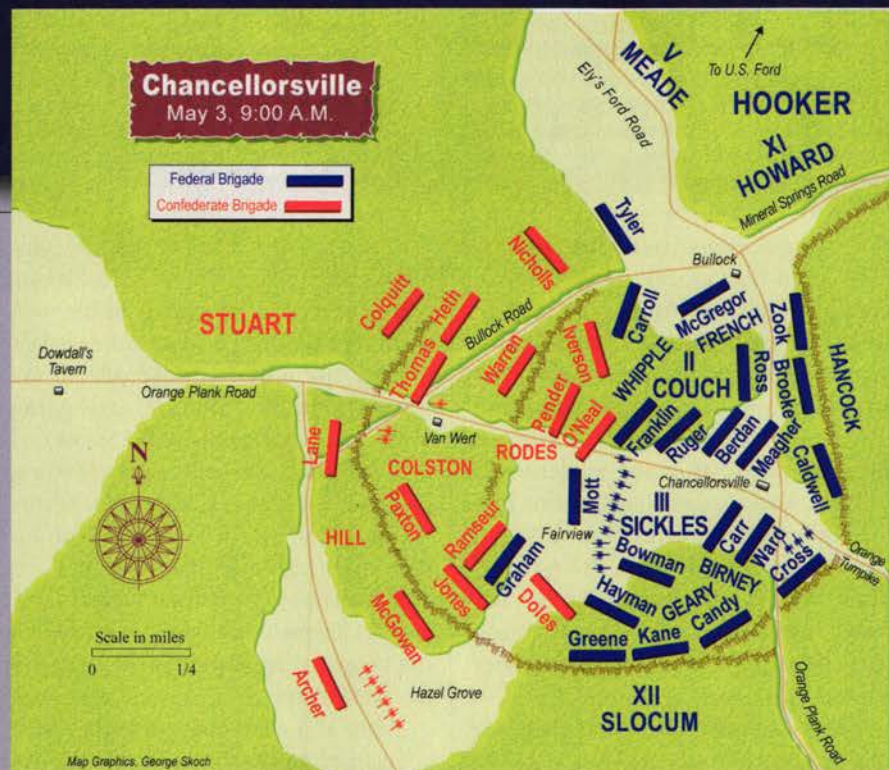
▼ Dan Sickles’ Third Corps is drawn up in support of the artillery line. Sickles is mounted at right.



Gen. William H. French to dispatch some troops from his division in the Second Corps west so they could be used in a counterattack. French responded promptly to Hooker's request and within minutes had seven fresh Union regiments marching westward in search of the rebels. The lead brigade of this force, Col. Samuel Carroll's, quickly eliminated the threat posed by Thomas's Georgians. "We moved in splendid line," one of Carroll's men later wrote, "and came on the Rebels as soon as we entered the woods. We gave the first volley and the first cheer." Already low on ammunition and unsupported on either flank, Thomas's exhausted men broke and began fleeing back through the woods "like a plague had fallen among them" one Federal soldier declared.²²

Carroll's men then, along with the rest of French's force, continued pushing westward. The impetuosity of French's advance, in combination with nearby Union artillerymen unleashing what Lane described as "concentrated, murderous fire from the Chancellorsville hill," enabled the Federals to drive Heth's men back and reclaim the eastern line of breastworks along and north of the Orange Plank Road. As they fell back from their advanced positions,

► Marylander Colonel (later brigadier general) Samuel Spriggs "Red" Carroll (1832-1893) was wounded three times during the Civil War, losing his left arm during the Overland Campaign.



Heth's men took refuge behind the western line of breastworks and, with the assistance of Colston's division, which had just come up, continued to engage the Federals from there.²³

Although able to help Heth check the momentum of French's counterattack, Colston's division was unable to do much more, in part because Chancellorsville was Colston's first (and last) battle as a division commander and the fighting done by the division on May 2 left it with only one experienced brigade commander. Nonetheless, Colston and his subordinates threw their men into a furious battle for control of the breastworks west of Fairview and Chancellorsville in which a confused series of charges and countercharges added more names to what was already becoming a fearsome butcher's bill.²⁴

The fighting was particularly fierce south of the Plank Road. There the five regiments of Ruger's brigade were now all up in the front line and, supported on the right by Brig. Gen. Joseph Nipe's brigade, which Williams had moved up from reserve, put up a bitter fight that ended with over 600 of its men killed, wounded, or missing. At one point, Col. Silas Colgrave of the 27th Indiana, upon receiving reports that the brigade was running low on ammunition, ordered a series of bayonet charges

that carried the Federal line into the enemy's position and produced in some places what Colgrave later described as "a regular hand to hand fight." Making the situation worse for the Confederates, when they tried to retreat through the woods, wrote Colgrave, "they became mixed up in a perfect jam, our men all the time pouring in the most deadly fire. I can safely say that I have never witnessed on any other occasion so perfect a slaughter."²⁵

So fierce a fight did Ruger's men put up that when the stalwart Stonewall Brigade arrived on the scene its commander, Brig. Gen. Elisha "Bull" Paxton, could not persuade any of the men he found huddled behind the western line of breastworks to join his and Col. Thomas Garnett's brigades in an assault on Ruger's position. Nonetheless, Paxton and Garnett went forward, with some of their men boasting to their comrades that "they would show us how to clear away a Federal line."²⁶

Paxton's and Garnett's charge accomplished little. Their advance was brought to a bloody halt by Williams's men and the Confederates were compelled to return to their comrades behind the western line of breastworks. Both Paxton and Garnett were mortally wounded in the attempt.²⁷

Although at 8:15 a.m. the Federals



◀ The brigades of Brigadier General Robert E. Rodes (1829-1864) enjoyed success on both sides of the Orange Plank Road.



◀ Brigadier Joseph Revere (1813-1880) chose a strange moment to pull his men out of the line.



◀ Alpheus Williams (1818-1878) was an excellent divisional commander who nevertheless remained a brigadier general for much of the war.

defending Fairview and Chancellorsville could take considerable pride in the fight they had put up so far, their ability to maintain their position was becoming increasingly uncertain. Stuart, who moved amongst his commands that morning singing "Old Joe Hooker, won't you get out of the wilderness?" still had Rodes's division to throw into the fight and it was at that moment moving forward to join the battle.²⁸ More importantly, for one of the few times in the war, the Federals found themselves in a very uneven artillery contest.

Immediately upon learning Archer's command had gained possession of Hazel Grove, Stuart directed Col. Alexander "to immediately crown the hill with 30 guns." Alexander quickly complied and was delighted to find Hazel Grove "a beautiful position for artillery. . . . It gave us fire over a larger portion of the Chancellorsville plain, & we could even see the Chancellorsville House from it, about 2,000 yards away." In combination with the dozen or so guns Alexander and Stuart had posted along the Orange Plank Road, the artillery on Hazel Grove was able to subject the Federals to a brutal crossfire. For Stuart's artillerists it was indeed, as one officer exclaimed to Alexander as he worked his guns at Hazel Grove, "A glorious day, Colonel, a glorious day!"²⁹

The experience was far less pleasant on the other side of the field. Sickles attempted to calm the nerves of his men by calmly smoking a cigar as he walked among them and loudly proclaiming with a smile, "Everything is going well."³⁰ But it was impossible to conceal the fact that the Federals defending Fairview were in a decidedly uncomfortable spot. "[I]t seemed a wonder that anything could live on that slope and hill-brow in front of Fairview," Gen. Williams declared as he described the scene for his daughter in a letter a few weeks later:

Shot and shell and musketry swept it from end to end and side to side, and the columns of destructive missiles seemed to increase every moment. . . . If you can stretch your imagination so far as to hear, in fancy, the crashing roll of 30,000 muskets mingled with the thunder of over a hundred pieces of artillery; the sharp bursting of shells and the peculiar whizzing sound of its dismembered pieces, traveling with a shriek in all directions; the crash and thug of round shot through trees and buildings and into the earth or through columns of human bodies; the "phiz" of the Minie ball; the uproar of thousands of human voices in cheers, yells and imprecations; and see the smoke from all

the engine's of war's inventions hanging sometimes like a heavy cloud and sometimes falling down like a curtain between the combatants; see the hundreds of wounded limping away or borne to the rear on litters; riderless horses rushing wildly about; now and then the blowing up of a caisson and human frames thrown lifeless into the air; the rush of columns to the front; the scattered fugitives of broken regiments and skulkers making for the rear. . . . But you must stand in the midst and feel the elevation which few can fail to feel, even amidst its horrors, before you have the faintest notion of a scene so terrible and yet so grand.³¹

Making matters worse for the defenders of Fairview and Chancellorsville, although Best handled the thirty-four guns under his direction as well as he could, shortly after 8 a.m. his crews began to run low on long-range ammunition and the heavy fire Confederate artillery had trained on his position made efforts at resupply futile. Then, as the ammunition situation began significantly deteriorating for the Federal artillerists, Rodes's division finally moved up to take over the fight.³²

By this point, Williams's brigades were exhausted and almost out of ammunition as well. Recognizing they





◀ Brigadier George P. Doles (1830-1864) was an excellent brigade commander who met his death at Cold Harbor.

could do no more, Williams ordered Ruger's, Ross's, and Knipe's men to pull back toward Chancellorsville.

"You are all my men!" Sickles told one of his regimental commanders as he rallied his command, "We must hold this line if every man of us should fall!" He also pushed Graham's brigade from the Third Corps, the same unit that Archer had earlier pushed off Hazel Grove, forward to take the place of Williams's men in the line south of the Plank Road. Soon thereafter, Graham found himself facing Brig. Gen. Stephen Dodson Ramseur's brigade of North Carolinians from Rodes's division. Just as Bull Paxton had earlier, when Ramseur reached the western line of log breastworks, he found not one of the men huddled behind them was willing to accompany his command in renewing the attack.³³

Nonetheless, Ramseur led his men forward and, fortuitously, the line of his advance brought his command into action in such a way as to enable him to hit Graham's right. When they saw Ramseur's men coming at them at the double-quick, Graham's men rose from their prone position and opened fire. For a few minutes the two sides engaged in a sharp firefight before Ramseur managed to resume his drive forward as Graham's men broke and began retreating back toward the Chancellor House in what their commander later conceded to be "considerable confusion."³⁴

Meanwhile, another brigade from Rodes's division, Brig. Gen. George Doles's, entered the fight to the right of Ramseur and its advance carried it to a position from which it could take advantage of the now uncovered right flank of Geary's division. Doles's Georgians proceeded to work their way into the rear of Geary's position, which in combination with the advance of Anderson's division of Lee's wing of the



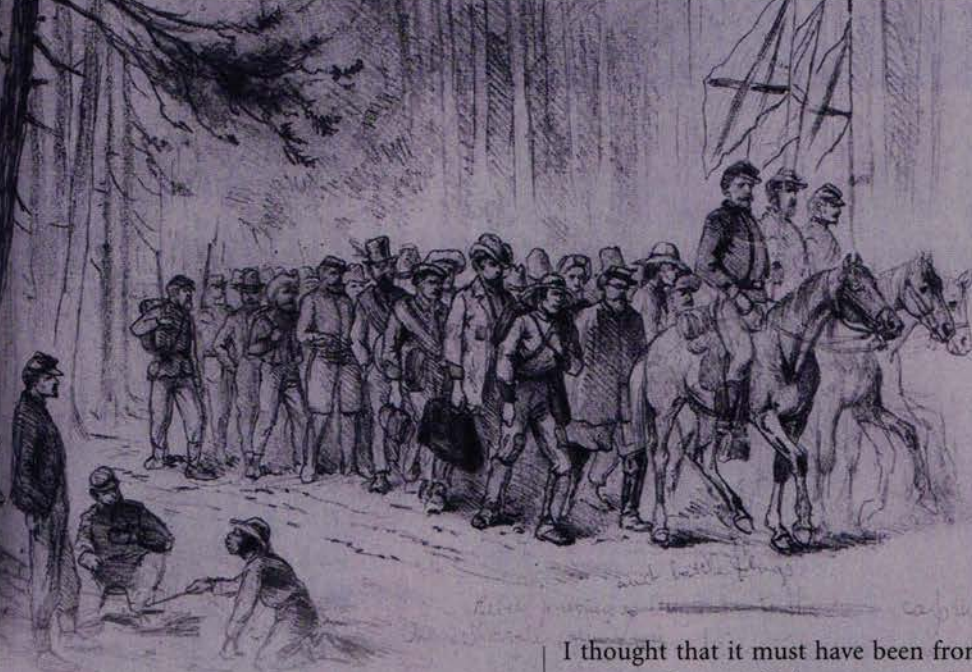
army from the south subjected Geary's men to a terrible crossfire. Desperate for direction, Geary exclaimed to Second Corps commander Darius Couch, "My division can't hold its place; what shall I do?" All Couch could say in reply was, "I don't know, but do as we are doing; fight it out." Geary tried but with its right flank falling apart it was clear his division could not remain where it was. Thanks in part to the fact that Doles's advance also placed him in canister range of the Union guns on Fairview, Geary eventually managed to extricate his men from their precarious position. But they were only able to do so after a desperate fight, which reached such a fevered pitch that Geary briefly lost his voice shouting out commands and was compelled to hand command over to one of his subordinates as the division fell back toward Chancellorsville.³⁵

As Ramseur's and Doles's attacks, in combination with Anderson's advance, were collapsing the Federal position south and west of Fairview, Rodes's brigades north of the Plank Road were also achieving success. There Brig. Gen. Alfred Iverson's and Brig. Gen. Edward O'Neal's brigades drove the Federals back and threatened to envelop the batteries at Fairview from the north. With their ammunition chests rapidly emp-

tying and the infantry around them collapsing, the artillerymen began pulling back toward Chancellorsville. Sickles then sent an aide back to Hooker's headquarters requesting assistance for the troops still fighting to hold on to Fairview, loss of which would render possession of Chancellorsville untenable as well.³⁶

Sickles's aide reached Hooker around 9 a.m. and found the general on the porch of the Chancellor House. Just then a well-aimed piece of Confederate solid shot struck the house and caused a large pillar to fall onto and knock the Federal commander senseless. Although Hooker managed to regain some of his bearings about a half hour later, it quickly became clear that he had been seriously injured and had to turn over command to his senior subordinate, Maj. Gen. Darius Couch.³⁷ As a consequence of this most unfortunate stroke of fate, the aggressive spirit that usually distinguished "Fighting Joe's" generalship would be absent the rest of the Chancellorsville Campaign (and help fuel a determined effort by his subordinates afterward to persuade Washington that a change in command was needed). Upon turning over command to him, Hooker told Couch in no uncertain terms that he was to give up Chancellorsville and pull the forces

◀ Union artillery fires in support of an advanced infantry line.



◀ Confederate prisoners being escorted to the rear. The cavalry display captured rebel flags.

defending the crossroads back to a stronger position closer to the Rappahannock.³⁸

In fact, by that point the morning's battle had already decisively tipped in favor of the Confederates, who were then advancing over and driving the Federals from Fairview and Chancellorsville. Hooker's men managed to make it back to the new position their commander had selected, despite the pressure exerted against them by Lee's now reunited army, due to hard fighting by Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock's division of the Second Corps, which served as the Union rear guard.³⁹

When Lee learned at around 10 a.m. that his men had finally achieved the tactical objective he established in his orders to Stuart the night before—possession of Chancellorsville—he was a mile away at Hazel Grove. The commander of the Army of Northern Virginia then rode his horse forward in the direction of the Chancellor House. As he crossed the mile of ground between Hazel Grove and Chancellorsville, a member of his staff later recalled, "One long unbroken cheer . . . rose high above the roar of battle and hailed the presence of a victorious chief. [Lee] sat in the full realization of all that soldiers dream of—triumph; and as I looked at him in the complete fruition of the success which his genius, courage, and confidence in his army had won,

I thought that it must have been from some such scene that men in ancient days ascended to the dignity of gods."⁴⁰

Although the fight for Fairview and Chancellorsville was a Confederate triumph, there remained a fair share of twists and turns to be played out before the Chancellorsville Campaign came to its final, dismal end for the Army of the Potomac. Nonetheless, during the morning of May 3, 1863, Lee had succeeded in reuniting his army and seizing possession of Chancellorsville. It was an accomplishment, though, that the men of the Union Second, Third, and Twelfth Corps made him pay an extremely high price for. "No bloodier struggle ever raged on the American continent," a Maine soldier later declared, "than on that Sabbath morning." Nearly 9,000 of Lee's men had fallen in less than five hours of

what another participant in the battle proclaimed "the hardest battle that ever was fought." The Federals had also suffered heavily, losing about 8,600 men.⁴¹ But the Army of the Potomac remained a formidable force when night fell on May 3, 1863, and the relative attrition rates, almost impossible to avoid in the set piece slugfest Lee was compelled to fight on the morning of May 3, could not be sustained for long by the Southern army.

Lee's men were indeed entitled to claim a tactical success in the battle that morning and, by doing so, helped secure many more months of life for the Confederacy. However, in that same battle, the men of the Army of the Potomac had also accelerated the arrival of the day when what Abraham Lincoln labeled the "awful arithmetic" finally brought about the total defeat of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederacy.⁴²

► Brigadier James Archer (1817-1864) had a typical approach to battle: "Fix bayonets! Forward, guide center! Charge 'em boys!"



► A federal field hospital was set up at the Kalmbach sawmill.

NOTES

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13. H.T. Childs, "Archer's Brigade at Chancellorsville," *Confederate Veteran* 28 (June 1920): 221.
14. Ibid., 221; O.R., vol. 25, pt. 1: 409, 414, 925; Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 207.
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19. James H. Lane, "Flank March at Chancellorsville, 2 and 3 May, 1863," in Walter Clark, ed., *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-'65*, 5 vols. (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, 1901), vol. 5: 96; O.R., vol. 25, pt. 1: 391, 703, 891, 894, 917.
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36. O.R., vol. 25, pt. 1: 675, 943, 952, 985-86; U.S. Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War*, vol. 4: 8.
37. U.S. Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, vol. 4: 128; Samuel P. Bates, "Hooker's Comments on Chancellorsville," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. 3: 220-21.
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42. William O. Stoddard, *Inside the White House in War Times: Memoirs and Reports of Lincoln's Secretary*, edited by Michael Burlingame (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 101. That Lee fully recognized this was the case was evident in a conversation he had a few months later in which he declared: "At Fredericksburg we gained a battle, inflicting very severe loss on the enemy in men and material; our people were greatly elated—I was much depressed. We had really accomplished nothing; we had not gained a foot of ground, and I knew the enemy could easily replace the men he had lost. . . . At Chancellorsville we gained another victory; our people were wild with delight—I on the contrary was more depressed than after Fredericksburg; our loss was severe and again we gained not an inch of ground." Henry Heth to J. William Jones, June 1877, in *Southern Historical Society Papers*, edited by J. William Jones and others, 52 vols. (1877-1959; Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1977), vol. 4: 153-54.

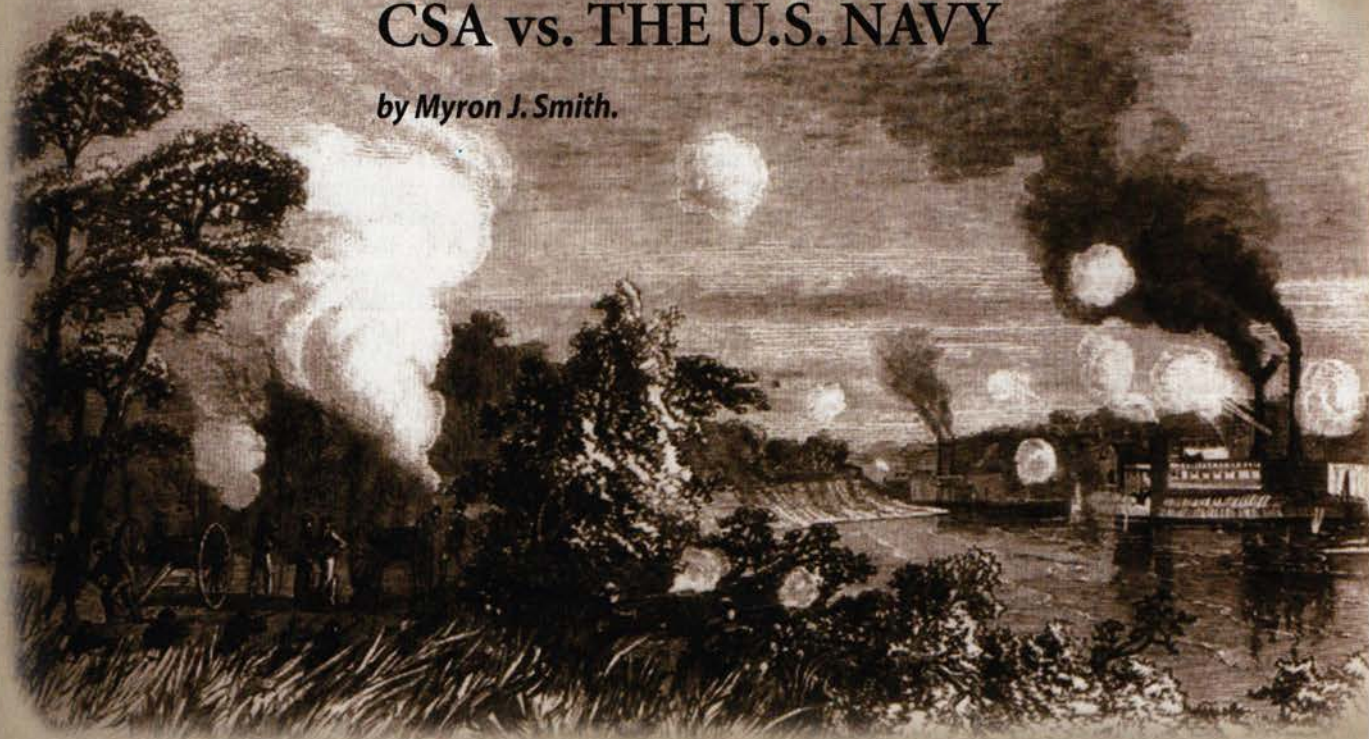
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INTERDICTING THE MISSISSIPPI

COLONEL COLTON GREENE,
CSA vs. THE U.S. NAVY

by Myron J. Smith.



▲ *The transport John Warner, escorted by the tinclad Covington, attacked by Confederate artillery on the Red River below Alexandria, May 4, 1864. The vessels escaped, only to be destroyed the next day in a similar ambush. This is exactly the kind of action undertaken by Colonel Greene (inset) on the Mississippi.*

By the spring of 1862, United States National troops were making significant inroads into the Upper South, mostly in the undeveloped area west of the Allegheny Mountains. Major victories were won and with them came large swaths of land and several sizeable towns. A logistical chain to maintain the viability of these gains had to be run through largely unpacified territory or via the rivers, then natural communication arteries.

This Union challenge was met, but usually not directly by regular Confederate field armies. To disrupt the Federal supply cord, the South very early on began to rely upon mobile cavalry forces (regular and partisan), supported by foot volunteers (variously uniformed if at all) from the indigenous population. This resulted in growing Federal frustration and increasingly harsher counterinsurgency policies and initiatives.

Initially, the Federals had too few fast gunboats to interdict a large number of

Southern riverbank attacks. Those available, whether led by either Navy or Army officers, could not operate far from the main shipping channels at certain times of the year due to low water depth. As Rebel assaults intensified, new Union weapons, strategy, and leadership were required.

Going outside of its Navy-commanded Western Flotilla, the War Department put together a special anti-guerrilla force under Col. Alfred Ellet. That Federal agency, together with several states such as Indiana, also operated ersatz gunboats. These were usually chartered steamers protected by cotton bales and armed with field pieces. Needless to say, the U.S. Navy, together with the Confederate guerrillas, had little regard for these units, particularly the "gotten-up" armed steamers.

Northern naval commanders leading the Western Flotilla began to find the necessary ingredients to combat the scourge of the Rebel irregulars during the summer of 1862. Several

Southern generals saw it might be possible to disrupt Northern incursions

light captured steamers were converted into gunboats and employed on the Tennessee and Ohio. Initiation of a comprehensive riverine anti-guerrilla mission was much slower in development.

Numerous attacks upon river traffic stimulated the Union military to create a new dedicated "mosquito squadron" to catch or frustrate partisans operating against traffic on those streams. It would provide convoy and other protections for Union shipping and sympathizers, while also engaged in patrol and flag-showing missions.

At the same time, new light draught gunboats were added. Altered from purchased river steamers and covered with thin sheets of iron, they were nicknamed "tinclads." They were armed primarily with 24-pdr howitzers supplemented on occasion with Parrot rifles. A total of 76 tinclads were eventually ordered and were modified in shipyards from Cincinnati to St. Louis and Cairo.

It was fall 1862 before these initiatives began to bear fruit and the initial units could be allocated. The river levels were initially down and it took time to convert and crew the boats.

The War Department's Western Flotilla was converted into the U.S. Navy's Mississippi Squadron in October of that year. Its new commander, Rear Adm. David Dixon Porter, happily pushed tinclad acquisition, largely viewing the craft as reinforcements for his main fleet.

As was the case off-and-on since the summer, Porter remained committed to the reduction of the Confederate bastion of Vicksburg, far down the Mississippi. Although the commitment was refreshed, the process would take another nine months.

From the moment they began to arrive, the new tinclad additions served admirably. Their roles were multiple and they served as dispatch and light replenishment vessels, towboats, patrol boats, swift raiders, minesweepers, convoy guardians or anchorage pickets, and gunfire support vessels.

With only one or two exceptions when they were diverted to provide escort and gunfire support for purely military ventures (such as those associated with the 1863 Vicksburg campaign or the Red River Campaign of 1864), the light draughts maintained an aggressive

counterinsurgency and logistical protection effort on the Western waters for the remainder of the conflict.

There were far fewer mundane moments aboard a tinclad than a larger Federal ironclad. Rowland Stafford True, who served aboard the *Silver Lake*, remembered how the time passed: "One day, lying peacefully at anchor, and the next, off on some expedition up or down the river." He continued: "Up the Cumberland today, up the Tennessee tomorrow, down the Mississippi the next—here and there wherever needed."¹

Due to their success (only 13 were lost), the U.S. tinclads were among the most important vessels of the Civil War. Their activities continuously reinforced the claims of the North to an undivided Union through incessant probes into the heartland via the Western rivers that helped to keep open the great Midwestern communications lines by convoy, patrol, and direct support of national military action. Many times, the mission was not easy. As Union forces drove deeper into the South and Trans-Mississippi West, Confederate raiders continued their own efforts to slow down their enemy. Southern generals from Tennessee to Arkansas saw that it might still be possible to disrupt Northern incursions if they intensified their war upon Yankee logistics.

For the U.S. Mississippi Squadron and its tinclads, the scene of action following the conclusion of the March-May 1864 Red River



▲ Brigadier General Alfred Ellet (1820-1895) became commander of the Mississippi Marine Brigade in mid-1862.

▼ The ironclad *Barataria* snagged in the Amite River, Louisiana and attacked by rebel guerrillas. It was a constant struggle for the Union to keep the river supply lines open.





▲ Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter (1813-1891).

campaign reverted to the familiar territory along the banks of the Mississippi, Ohio, Cumberland, Tennessee, White, and Arkansas Rivers. The Red River was blockaded, while the interior lands up the Yazoo were largely abandoned. As the main field armies of both sides moved farther east, the Confederate partisan and anti-shipping war, begun in 1862, continued with new ferocity in the West.

Union Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele's VII Corps participation in the Red River campaign is often called the Camden expedition because that is as far as his Federal army was able to get from Little Rock before turning about and returning to the state capital on May 3. The details of the various actions and operations involved in the Camden enterprise are, like those of the larger Red River effort, not important to this story except to say that the general's failure emboldened Confederates within Arkansas and elsewhere in the Trans-Mississippi theatre to resume the offensive.

In mid-May, Confederate theater commander Lt. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith ordered preparations begun for a late summer invasion of Missouri. As the month closed, a deputy, Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, commander of the District of Arkansas, turned the cavalry division of Brig. Gen. John S. Marmaduke loose to recruit new troops and to disrupt Federal logistics.

In the wake of the VII Corps retreat to Little Rock after the Camden adventure, Rebel horsemen rode roughshod over Arkansas, "plundering and overawing the Unionists" as Benson J. Lossing put it right after the war. The gunboat men on the Mississippi, Arkansas, and White Rivers now faced the same dilemma as their colleagues on the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers: a concentrated strategy of

blockade initiated by regular troops.

Partisans and guerrillas remained a significant danger on the White River. In a letter home on June 6, Paymaster's Steward John Swift of the tinclad *Silver Cloud* remembered that, on a recent trip up that stream, Rebels were "as thick as peas everywhere."

Southerners dreamed, he believed, of capturing a tinclad and had planned just how to take one. Concealing themselves along the riverbanks where a gunboat was expected to land for forage, the butternuts held themselves silent hoping one would land and tie up. If it did, Rebels would run down and try to board and overwhelm the crew. Swift's thoughts were probably based on actual events when irregulars had overwhelmed the crews of steamboats putting into shore.

Inland on the western shore of the Mississippi, one of the Confederate riders deputized to interdict Union transport was legendary butternut cavalryman, Brig. Gen. Joseph O. ("Jo") Shelby,² the most famous horse soldier in the Trans-Mississippi theatre and commander of one of Marmaduke's two brigades. Along the banks of the Mississippi, the less-famous but equally-determined and colorful Col. Colton Greene³ also harassed Union shipping.

During May-June, Shelby and his mounted force of between 2,000 and 3,000 men with the Missouri battery of Capt. Richard Collins, moved across the Arkansas River east of Little Rock and headed toward the White River country, marching down the east bank of that stream toward Devall's Bluff. His purpose was threefold: to recruit soldiers to the Southern cause, to end the depredations of guerrillas turned terrorists, and to block Steele's logistical flow by attacking his supply lines between Little Rock and the Bluff.

While Shelby undertook a difficult march toward Clarendon that led him through the overflowing bottoms of Cache River and Bayou DeVue, Col. Colton Greene of the Third Missouri Cavalry (CSA), leading Marmaduke's other brigade while his superior was on leave, took his horsemen via Monticello eastward across Bayous Bartholomew and Macon to the flat, featureless bottomlands along the west bank of the Mississippi. There he was to put "an immediate quietus" on local cotton trading with



▲ Colonel Solomon Kitchen (1820-1891), commander of the 7th Missouri Cavalry. Kitchen was well-suited for the kind of warfare conducted by Greene, for he had started his Civil War service under guerrilla leader M. Jeff Thompson.



► The 4th Missouri cavalry in action.

Colonel Greene employed the navigational difficulties of the Greenville Bends to his advantage.

the Federals and to harass river traffic.

Accompanying Greene, were 800-900 men drawn from Greene's own regiment, temporarily led by Capt. Benjamin Crabtree, along with the Confederate 4th Missouri Cavalry (Col. John Q. Burbridge), 7th Missouri Cavalry (Col. Solomon G. Kitchen), and 8th Missouri Cavalry (Col. William L. Jeffers) plus six fieldpieces of Capt. J. H. Pratt's Texas Battery. These men would engage Northern gunboats and amphibious forces in a spirited, but largely unremembered, campaign from Chicot County, the southeastern-most county in Arkansas. Greene would blockade the great river for over a week and leave several tinclad captains reeling.⁴

As ordained, the commanders of the various Mississippi Squadron sectors made regular reports to Rear Adm. Porter concerning the activities of their vessels and their dispositions. From his flag-ship, the Pook turtle *Louisville*, Lt. Commander Elias K. Owen, chief of the Sixth District, wrote regarding his tinclads on May 17. "The *Prairie Bird* was in the Yazoo, the *Exchange* was at Skipwith's Landing, and the *Romeo* was stationed off Gaines Landing [five miles above No. 82] 'as a center,' he confided, while the *Marmora* patrolled 'from Island [No.] 76 to Napoleon."

Of course, other vessels passed through Owen's district every day. On May 22, the tinclad *Curlew*, for example, with orders to transport a party from the U.S. Coast Survey to Cairo, had stopped briefly at Vicksburg to coal.

Before departing the former Rebel bastion, the light draught's officers, including Acting Master's Mate De Witt C. Morse, learned "that Marmaduke, with 6,000 men and a battery of ten or fifteen guns, was at Island No. 82 preparing to blockade the river." Rebel irregulars also attacked at the heads of Islands No. 80 and 81. Earlier, a "reliable woman" had suggested to Acting Master Thomas Baldwin that the Southern general would "have 30 pieces of artillery on the river in a few days."

Three days later as she passed Columbia, AR, lookouts aboard the *Romeo* watched the shoreline for signs of Confederate cavalry said to be in the area. Baldwin, like Morse and his colleagues, had heard that butternut scouts had several times foraged to the edge of the river and had fired into transports at the foot of Island No. 82, where the more heavily loaded boats

going down were forced to hug the shore as they turned in through the river bend.

On the evening of May 23, a few days after the Federal expedition quit the Red River, Col. Greene's regiment, with Pratt's attached artillery, arrived at Campbell's Landing, on the Arkansas side of the Mississippi River near Gaines Landing. Greene, like Col., the Rev., David C. "Parson" Kelley on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers in the fall of the year, had very definite ideas about assaulting riverboats.

Col. Greene would employ the navigational dangers of the winding river stretch between Chicot Lake and Gaines Landing to his advantage. Here in these Greenville Bends (named for the town on the eastern bank in the state of Mississippi), steamboats, with a top speed of about 9-10 mph, had to navigate through long river curves separated by narrow peninsulas of land. Depending upon their north-south direction, the boats would always come closer to shore on one side than another.

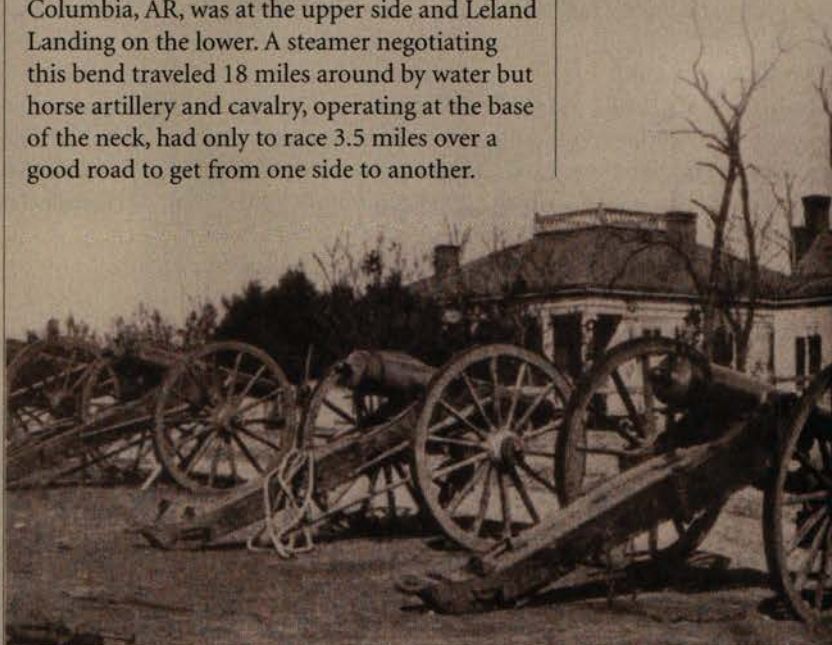
Given this topography, batteries could be placed in two or more locations, allowing vessels to sail past one into the teeth of another without the possibility of backward escape. Or, these horse artillery units could be quickly limbered and speed across a neck of land from one bend to another, catching surviving steamers more than once.

One of the bends, Cypress Bend, was a particular favorite of the Confederate leader. Columbia, AR, was at the upper side and Leland Landing on the lower. A steamer negotiating this bend traveled 18 miles around by water but horse artillery and cavalry, operating at the base of the neck, had only to race 3.5 miles over a good road to get from one side to another.



▲ Colonel William L. Jeffers CSA (7-1903), commander of the 8th Missouri Cavalry.

▼ Napoleons of the type used by Greene.





◀ USS *Prairie Bird* (formerly the *Mary Miller*), one of the tinclads that played a vital part in the riverine war.

At daybreak the next morning, a 40-man detachment from Company F of the 4th Missouri Cavalry was dispatched to take the sternwheel cotton boat *Lebanon*⁵ discovered lying at Ford's Landing, 10 miles below Greenville. Stealthily seizing a yawl at the bank, a number of the men managed to get aboard, capture the boat, and remove her goods, including \$20,000 worth of dry goods and \$20,000 in cash, to say nothing of cotton. Once that task was accomplished, the vessel was burned. The freed crewmen were told to pass the word that any additional cotton traders or speculators captured would be executed.

While the 4th Missouri detachment took the *Lebanon*, the six guns of Capt. J. H. Pratt's battery were placed on top of the riverbank levee at Gaines Landing, with their support stationed under cover 50 yards in the rear. The wait for action was not long.

It was just past 4 a.m. when the *Curlew* paddled past Island No. 82, following the timberclad *Tyler* by about two miles. During the next hour as daylight appeared and the men, as they did every morning at that time, stood to their guns, nothing was seen along the western shore. From his location on the quarterdeck, Acting Master's Mate Morse ordered the piping up of hammocks while, simultaneously, peering into his spyglass at the riverbank ahead.

As the *Curlew* passed Gaines Landing, Morse and the other lookouts could see what appeared to be men arriving at the bank and starting to unload wood or cotton. As the gunboat splashed closer, it was determined, with some horror, that the fellows were, in fact, hurriedly "preparing a battery for our benefit." Still there was some hope; as the boat was steaming up the river, she was able to lie close to the opposite side of the Mississippi across the point in shoal water.

When the light draught reached a point about three-quarters of a mile from the enemy, the disposition of the Confederate mobile battery, which Greene would repeat in the days ahead, could be clearly distinguished. Three or four guns were mounted on the edge of the bank in clear sight, while the remainder were hidden behind the levee. The Rebel gunners, perhaps familiar with the big guns of the timberclad, chose to let the *Tyler* pass.

All of a sudden, as the men aboard the *Curlew* cleared for action, the Confederate battery on shore opened fire. The prompt response aboard the gunboat ("every officer was at his station as soon as the ball opened," wrote Morse later) allowed the four portside howitzers to "give them one broadside before the thieves had given us their second round."

Perhaps expecting to easily sink the tinclad with their opening salvo, Greene's gunners, like the men of the *Curlew*, found themselves engaged in a very spirited 20-35 minute (depending upon your source) gun fight. The Rebel cannons fired quickly; bluejackets aboard the light draught

thought themselves under a hail of cannonballs, shells, and shrapnel, to say nothing of small arms fire.

"Pieces of casemate and splinters were flying all around the decks," Morse remembered, and bullets and shrapnel riddled the cabins and staterooms. Many of the Confederate shots were aimed, as they always were in these fights, at the gunboat's pilothouse and paddle wheel. Many of these rounds flew over and landed in the river beyond. The *Curlew* was hit multiple times by the Southern cannon in what many would remember as the "hottest engagement" in which the boat was ever engaged.

A 12-pounder shell was seen to skip over the water, losing most of its energy but retaining sufficient force to fly up, strike the tinclad's casemate, and fall, unexploded, on to the wheelguard. A 6-pounder ball lodged itself halfway through the rudder without breaking it. Another came through the casemate very near the No. 2 gun without exploding while two other 6-pounder balls went completely through on the port side, sailing just above the deck without doing much damage.

In response to the Rebel gift, the *Curlew's* howitzers returned the Southern compliment, firing 28 shots of their own toward shore, some of which were believed to have struck "in their midst." At the same time, the tinclad's executive officer, Acting Ensign H. B. O'Neil, repeatedly pulled on the whistle cord to warn the timberclad *Tyler*, two miles ahead, that the *Curlew* was under attack.

Before the *Tyler* could round to and come to the *Curlew's* assistance with her big 8-inch guns, Col. Greene's horse artillery limbered up and moved down the river bank, taking a position at Daniel Sessions' plantation. As the Confederates were moving, the *Tyler* arrived and its commander offered his congratulations to Morse on the light draught's gunnery.

The *Tyler* had to continue on to White River. Before she departed, her captain, the ranking on-scene USN officer, ordered the *Curlew* to proceed up and meet the tinclad *Romeo* (lying a few miles above). From there they would convoy Capt. Joseph H. Williams' big sidewheel steamer *Nicholas Longworth*,⁶ which had just come down with troops



► It will readily be seen how the Confederates could move their guns across a point so as to engage vessels twice.

and horses, below Gaines Landing.

The three Union vessels proceeded downstream without interference. Coming abreast of Island No. 82, the machinery of the *Curlew* broke down, compelling her to anchor and effect repairs. Rather than heave to and wait for her, the *Romeo* and *Longworth* continued on.⁷

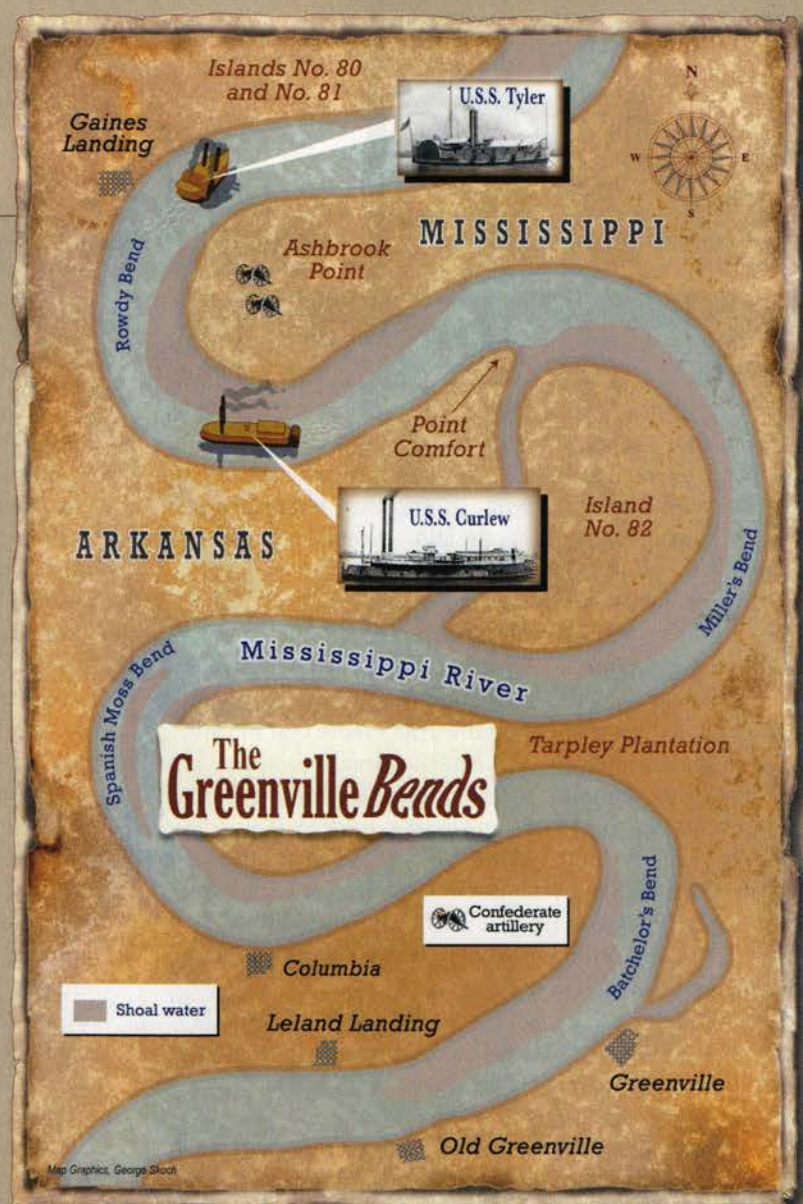
Proceeding down about 10 miles to a point about a mile above Columbia, AR, the tinclad and the transport were attacked by musketry. Sharpshooters firing from behind the levee riddled both craft. While the *Romeo* engaged the enemy, Capt. Williams, whose crew and volunteers had initially joined in the resistance with their wheeled 6-pounder, a howitzer, and rifles, was signaled to run on.

The *Nicholas Longworth* paddled on into Cypress Bend, but, as she passed Columbia, she was fired upon by Greene's battery, which dropped shot and shell all around her. This firing was heard at Greenville, where three boats of the Union's Mississippi Marine Brigade (MMB), under Col. George E. Currie, were stationed to protect river traffic. This amphibious brigade, descended from the outfit established by Col. Charles Ellet before the June 1862 Battle of Memphis, had something of a controversial reputation with all sides, Union and Confederate, U.S. Army and U.S. Navy.

When she was attacked in Columbia Bend, the *Longworth* was hit by eight Rebel shells. One went through Williams' room, two through the cabin, and a fourth through the pilothouse. As the *Longworth* pressed on, the little cotton boat *Delta*, the same one fired into near Greenville in January by Confederate Brig. Gen. Lawrence "Sul" Ross, came upriver upon the batteries and was likewise taken under fire.

While the two civilian steamers were under attack, the *Romeo*, out of ammunition, raced up to the location of the disabled *Curlew* and borrowed several boxes of shells, before returning down to seek the *Longworth*. Reunited, the two boats continued down together, both taking hits in their hulls and upper works.

During this time, Col. Robert Lawther's 10th Missouri Cavalry joined Greene. Thinking the *Longworth* and *Romeo* would soon be out of immediate danger and would continue past Greenville rather than stopping, Col. Greene limbered four of his cannon and sped across

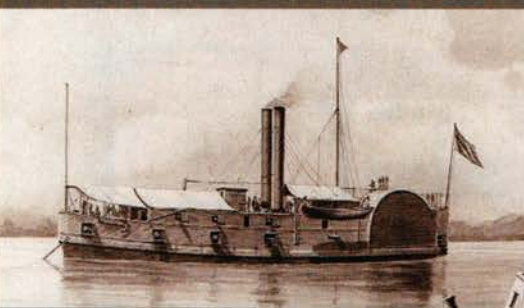


the peninsula to deploy them on its lower side at Leland's Landing ready to catch them as they puffed past. One section of artillery, then pounding the *Delta*, was detached to remain with Lawther.

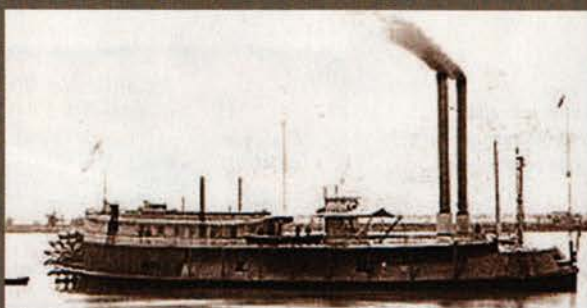
Looking like so much Swiss cheese, the *Nicholas Longworth*, together with the *Romeo*, was able to make it back to Greenville. The *Delta*, in flames, had in the time since careened over and made for the opposite bank as she approached the town. A towboat was sent to save her from beaching and to bring her in. ⁸

At Greenville, Capt. Williams called upon Col. Currie, provided details on the Confederate assault, and asked for assistance in passing below. The MMB officer readily agreed and ordered that the *Nicholas Longworth* be lashed to one of his own vessels. Another MMB boat would lead and provide cover with its Parrott rifles.

◀ One of the Greenville Bends



▲ USS Tyler



▲ USS Curlew



▲ USS Covington

While the Yankees made their preparations, Col. Greene, below the town, made his. There was no natural cover along the river bank below Greenville so the Confederate officer spaced his artillery out along the shore. Separation was also a form of protection.

The three Federal boats, with Currie in the lead unit, came within range of Greene's gunners at Miles' Plantation during the afternoon. The Southerners wanted to destroy the troop boat and so paid no attention to Currie's lead vessel, allowing it to pass as they had the *Tyler* earlier that morning.

It turned out that the *Nicholas Longworth* was effectively shielded by the second MMB boat and even though the Rebels poured a hail of shot and shell at the two, it was the military vessel that suffered the brunt of the attack, taking 14 hits. Once the *Longworth* was out of artillery range, the shooting stopped. Greene retired from the riverbank and Currie's two vessels limped back to Greenville, having lost one man killed and two wounded.

Records are sparse as to whether or not one of the USN tinclads accompanied Currie's escort mission. There is no mention of it in the *Navy Official Records* if she did. On the other hand, contemporary Federal newspapers and Greene both agree that there was a gunboat engaged. In his description of the May 24 encounter near Leland's Landing, the colonel was quite specific:

We went into battery and waited the enemy's approach.

He came down in line of battle, crescent-shaped, with two marine boats, one gunboat, and a transport. I engaged the fleet, which held its position, maneuvering for near two hours, when it passed on. The gunboat was disabled, the marine boat *Diana* roughly handled, with many killed and wounded, and the transport penetrated in many places.

If there was a tinclad engaged, it was most likely the *Exchange*, the only boat then positioned to participate. More than likely, however, the contemporaries mistook one of Currie's MMB boats.

Following the Leland Landing fight, Col. Greene limbered up and galloped back to Columbia, where the *Romeo* was found completing repairs. The Confederates went back into battery and once again engaged the Union light draught. The Rebel leader later boasted that she was quickly disposed of: "struck 17 times; greatly damaged; got out of the way and has not since made its appearance before my batteries." Among those wounded on the gunboat was Acting Ensign John B. Dwyer, hit in the thigh by a musket ball.

After resting, Col. Greene moved his command back to Gaines Landing in the middle of the night, May 24/25. As the sun rose, he saw three gunboats out in the stream; these he ordered subjected to musket volleys. Being low on ammunition, he refrained from an artillery attack, electing instead to move to a point on the river 10 miles above Gaines.

On the 26th, Greene's gunners attacked the Ellet ram *Monarch*⁹ in sight of an unnamed gunboat. Although the amphibious warfare craft was hit several times, it escaped. The same day, Mississippi Squadron Sixth District commander Lt. Cmdr. Owen, cruising off Lake Providence, LA, received dispatches advising him of affairs in the Cypress Bend area. Hearing that Greene's pieces were superior to those of the light draughts, he immediately got underway to provide help with his *Louisville*.

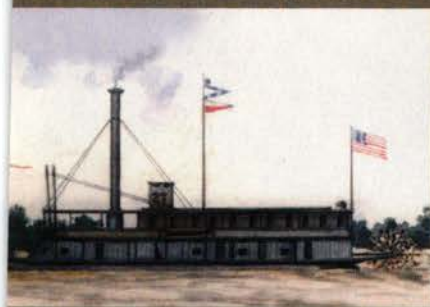
The next two days were taken up by Col. Greene's command with marches to Parker's on Bayou Macon and the Old River Lake, near Ditch Bayou. On May 28, the *Louisville* hove to off Gaines Landing. With the Confederates gone, Lt. Cmdr. Owen could, naturally, "see or hear nothing of the Rebel forces." When several Southern scouts peeked out upon the ironclad, they were greeted with a few Navy shrapnel shells. In a report to Rear Adm. Porter, Owen guessed that the insurgents might have moved down the river to attack Lake Providence and Goodrich's Landing, where troops were protecting stores and no gunboats were stationed.

The *Louisville* reached a peaceful Skipwith's Landing on May 29th. The district had been so quiet during the previous three days that Lt. Cmdr. Owen was convinced that the enemy had left the river. It was true, he believed, that there were a few guerrillas left on both banks, but they were "chiefly employed in conscription and getting animals."

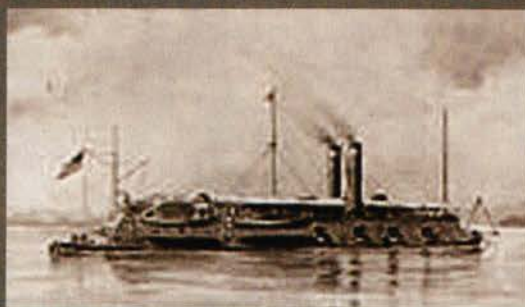
Having been joined by the 7th and 8th Missouri Cavalry Regiments, Colton Greene's command rode on the same day to Smith's Plantation, 4 miles from the Mississippi River town of Sunnyside. There it would endeavor to disabuse Owen of his faith in its absence.

Toward dusk, Capt. John Wolf, Jr's 176 ton sternwheeler *Rocket*,¹⁰ a veteran of the Shiloh campaign in 1862, hove in sight at Batchelor's Bend. Among her many passengers was the U.S. Army adjutant general Lorenzo Thomas and his staff. Greene's gunners and sharpshooters riddled the boat's upper decks before she could get away. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* later reported that "some nine shots passed through her; yet, strange to say, no one on board was injured."

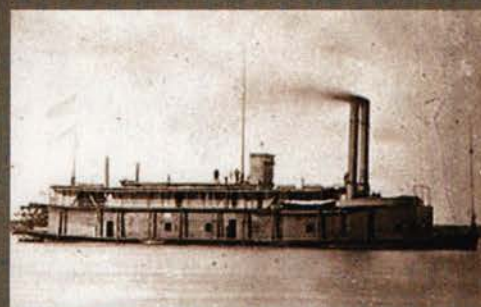
As the *Rocket* moved deeper into the bend, the



▲ USS Argosy



▲ USS Louisville



▲ USS Signal

Confederate horse artillery limbered up and raced above Columbia to continue the assault. At the same time, Col. Currie heard the gunfire and three of his MMB boats quickly steamed out of Greenville to effect a rescue. When the military craft reached the *Rocket*, a convoy past Columbia was organized. It didn't work. When the quartet came within range of Greene's guns, they were met with such a rain of fire that they had no choice but to round to and return to Greenville.

Employing an enhanced version of the combination he had used to convoy the *Longworth*, though with three protective craft instead of two, Currie undertook to get the *Rocket* up the river on the last day of the month. The Federal craft navigated safely past Columbia as, once again, Col. Greene had moved, this time to Smith's Plantation, just above Sunnyside.¹¹

Leaving only a few men to harass Currie and Thomas, Col. Greene now laid into the 200-ton Wheeling, WV-built sternwheeler *Clara Eames*.¹² His cannoneers quickly cut the cotton boat's escape pipe and penetrated her boiler, sending up hot steam. Signaling her distress, the *Eames* put into the bank and surrendered. "She was loaded with cotton," the colonel later wrote and she was stripped of everything valuable. Three men were killed and one wounded on the boat; the fifteen surviving Caucasian and seven African-American crewmembers were taken prisoner.

From the *Eames*' captain, the Confederate leader learned that Union Maj. Gen. A. J. Smith was assembling a force at Vicksburg to come after him. It was uncertain when his fleet of transports would weigh anchor. Believing the local MMB enemy en route to attack, Greene ordered his prize burnt to the water's edge.¹³

That night the steamer *Pauline Carroll*¹⁴ was attacked. Although one wheel was disabled, she escaped, largely because of a Confederate shell shortage. After several days of assaults, the Confederates had only 12 rifle shells, 6 roundshot, and 30 howitzers shells left.

Simultaneously, the Southerners found themselves facing an "ironclad" that came up and shelled their positions for some time. The Rebel batteries did not reply; however, sharpshooters plinked at her from long range.

At this time, Greene was reinforced with four more cannon from Hughey's Missouri Battery. Col. Lawther was left at Smith's Plantation with instructions to fire on anything coming his way while the commander, together with Pratt's Battery, transferred back to Columbia.¹⁵

Leaving Col. Lawther above, Col. Greene and his men reached Columbia by dawn, June 1. As previously, the battery was divided into two sections, dug in about 200 yards apart on and behind the levee. The upper section contained one each 18-pound rifle, 12-pound rifle, and 6-pounder fieldpiece, while the lower section held six guns: three 12-pound smoothbores, two 12-pound rifles, and a 10-pounder rifle. All was in readiness when another of Lt. Cmdr. Owen's light draughts, the *Exchange*, steamed into the trap.

The gunboat, on the lookout, but completely unaware of the enemy disposition, was allowed to pass the lower battery unmolested. As the Southern gunners silently watched, the *Exchange* steamed slowly around the point of a sand bar abreast the village. Once she was past (and therefore unable to back down), Hughey and Pratt opened a destructive cross fire.

With shells splashing all around, the tinclad's captain, Acting Master James C. Gipson,¹⁶ seeing that he had no alternative but to press on, ordered his pilot to proceed upriver past the upper battery at flank speed. As the paddlewheel increased revolutions at the rear of the boat, the port broadside guns returned fire.

The *Exchange* did not make it very far upstream before one of the Confederate shells disabled the port engine. With only one engine available, the speed of the light draught was reduced to a crawl and she suffered badly during the 45-minutes it took her to work her way out of range.

During the fight, Gipson's command was pierced by 35 shots. Of that number, eight smashed into the hull above the waterline and five pierced the casemate, exploding in the coal bunkers abreast the boilers. Another entered the port shell locker; it did not find a percussion shell and there was no burst. Yet another round sailed through the pilot house, knocking Gipson cold for 10-15 minutes and leaving him wounded in his head, leg, and shoulder. One bluejacket was killed and two wounded.

Once the *Exchange* was out of range, her port hogchain, hit during the passage, gave way causing the remaining engine to stop cold with a ruined pitman. The gunboat was immovable and an easy target for Confederate gunners if they followed her upstream.

The tinclad anchored and emergency repairs were made, while every man aboard anxiously prayed that the Rebels would not move their battery above and resume the contest. Within a short time, one engine sputtered back to life and the *Exchange* was able to limp off, making it to the east bank

where she remained until she could be towed off.

Satisfied that the *Exchange* was “badly disabled in her hull and boilers,” Greene made no effort to pursue her, being content to remain where he was in wait for additional targets. No other boats appeared, however, in the river under his guns that Wednesday.

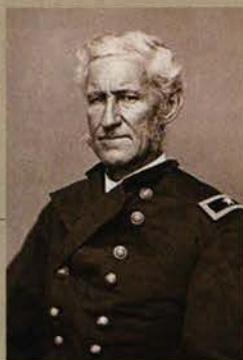
Rear Adm. Porter later paid tribute to the thrice-wounded Gipson. His gallant action was seen as redemption for the *Petrel* loss, a stain on the reputation of the Mississippi Squadron. The action of the *Exchange*’s skipper was held up as an example of “how a cool and brave commander can get out of difficulty if he is determined to do so.”

The success of Greene’s gunners in combating the lightly armored tinclads was remarked upon by Shelby’s adjutant, John Edwards, in his postwar history. There he claimed that the attacks on the *Curlew*, *Romeo*, and *Exchange*:

...utterly destroyed the prestige and name of terror of these boats with the soldiery; indeed, so little did they come to care for them, that while the batteries were engaged, the soldiers not on duty did not interrupt their games of cards, or other amusement of the moment, though sharply exposed to their fire.

It is quite probable that news of the Louisiana-Arkansas anti-tinclid triumphs enjoyed by the Confederates in May and June was picked up by other Southern military leaders in the West, most especially Nathan Bedford Forrest. These successes were widely known and it was acknowledged, even in Northern newspapers, that as a result of them, the Confederates of the region “have become emboldened and have less fear of the navy than formerly.”¹⁷

Col. Greene, though low on ammunition, maintained his blockade. With 10-14 guns now available, he was able to split and rest his forces, alternating one battery



▲ General Lorenzo Thomas, U.S. Army Adjutant General (1804-1875).

▼ *USS Rattler*. In September 1864 the Acting master, Daniel W. Glenney, conspired with the Confederates to allow his vessel to be captured and to hand over his copy of the Mississippi Squadron Signals, both for a “consideration.” The plot, however, failed.

and a covering regiment to the river each day. Additional exchanges occurred between the butternut cannoneers and the MMB, but by June 3, river traffic through the Greenville Bends had ceased. In a report to his superiors, the gallant horseman proudly announced that, for the loss of six men wounded, his little command had fought 21 Federal vessels “of which 5 gunboats and marine boats were disabled, 5 transports badly damaged, 1 sunk, 2 burned, and 2 captured.”

As might be expected, those on the receiving end of Col. Greene’s largess greatly overestimated the forces they faced. MMB, U.S. Army, and Mississippi Squadron officers all believed themselves engaged against 5,000-10,000 men with upwards of 40 guns. It would take a large force, they reasoned, to break the stranglehold. So it was that two divisions of Red River veterans from Maj. Gen. A. J. Smith’s XVI Corps, then at Vicksburg preparing to voyage to Memphis for reintegration into the Army of the Tennessee, were ordered to make a detour. Working with the MMB, it became their job to “clean out the rebels” in Chicot County or otherwise halt their anti-shipping war by giving them “such a lesson as will deter them from a renewal of similar attempts.”

Smith’s people and the MMB arrived at Sunnyside Landing on the evening of June 5. When the men were ashore, they marched in the rain next day in overwhelming numbers against Col. Greene’s few, but prepared men. The Battle of Ditch Bayou resulted in a Confederate withdrawal.

As soon as the little campaign was completed, the bluecoats reboarded their transports and departed up the river. The Southerners also rode out of Chicot County, headed for the Arkansas and White River regions. The commerce of the Mississippi past Chicot County was resumed and, with a few exceptions, it was not troubled further by organized Confederate army anti-shipping campaigns.¹⁸



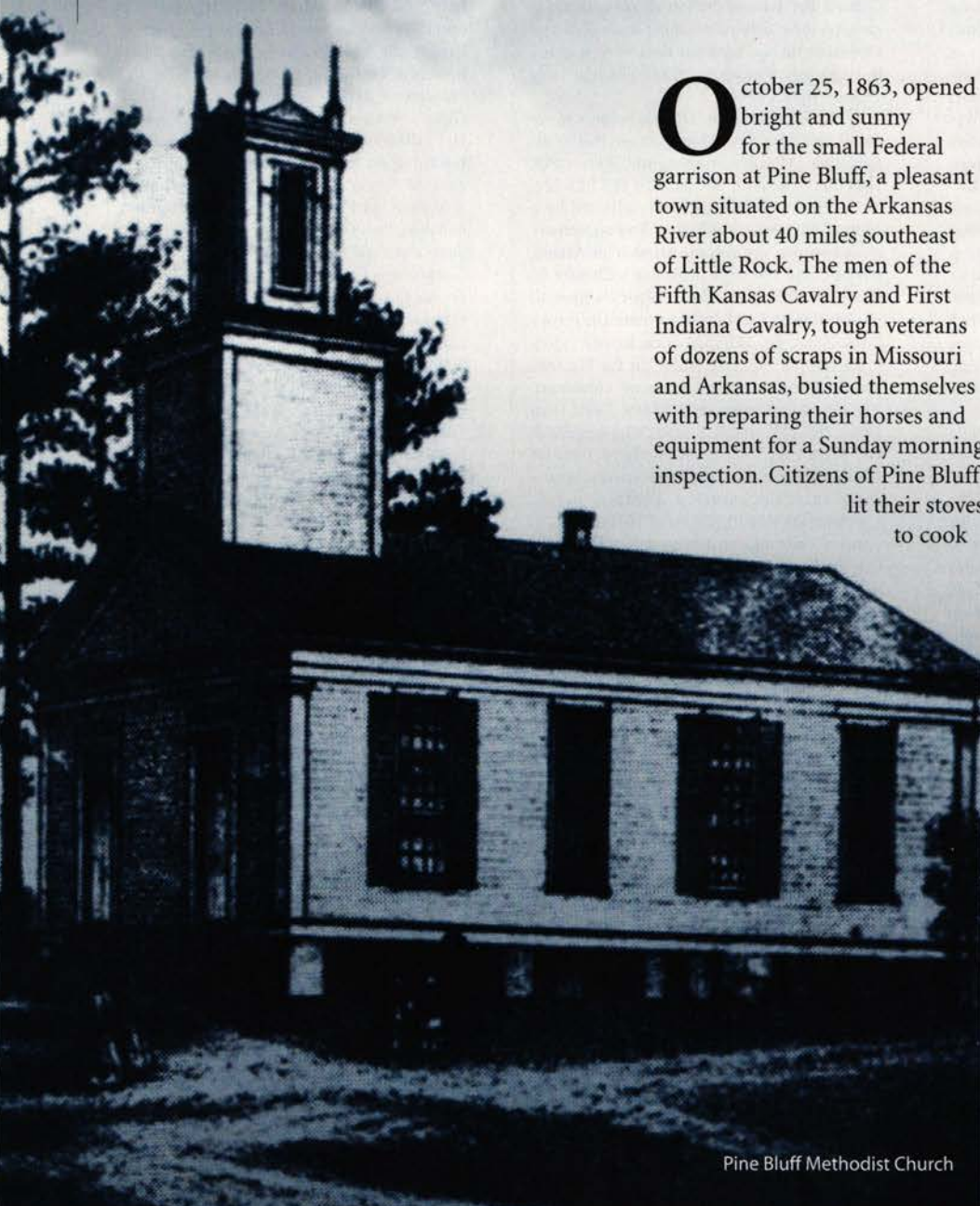
NOTES

- Rowland Stafford True, "Life Aboard a Gunboat [U.S.S. *Silver Lake*]: A First-Person Account," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, IX (February 1971), 41.
- A Kentuckian like John Hunt Morgan and a wealthy slave-holder like Tennesseean Nathan Bedford Forrest, Joe Shelby (1830-1897) joined the CSA cavalry under Sterling Price in 1861. Rising to the rank of colonel, he raised his own cavalry brigade, sometimes called the "Iron Brigade," and led it throughout the Trans-Mississippi theatre for the remainder of the war. Refusing to surrender, he led his brigade into Mexico to support Maximilian, returning to Missouri after the end of the French adventure. He was appointed a U.S. marshal in 1893. Mark M. Boatner, 3rd, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: David McKay, 1959), p. 737.
- Though petitions were signed by nearly every commander in the Trans-Mississippi including Marmaduke and Shelby, South Carolina-born Col. Greene (1832-1900) was never promoted to the rank of Brig. Gen. He was one of the most engaged and capable officers of the Confederacy from the beginning of the conflict, a man of whom Shelby's wartime biographer, Edwards, would write: "no braver or better officer ever drew a sword." Following the conflict, he lived and died in Memphis. Charles Steven Palmer, "Our Most Noble Stranger": The Mystery, Gallantry, and Civicism of Colton Greene," Unpublished MA thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1995; John W. Coltern, *Confederates of Elmwood* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2001), p. 183; John N. Edwards, *Shelby and His Men; or, The War in the West* (Cincinnati, OH: Miami Printing and Publishing Co., 1867, reprinted, Waverly, MO: General J. O. Shelby Memorial, 1993), p. 251; Bruce S. Allardice, *More Generals in Gray* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), pp. 104-105.
- U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. 34, Pt. 1: 486-487 (cited hereafter as OR); OR, I, 34, 3: 828-829; OR, I, 41, 1: 191-192; OR, I, 41, 4: 1068-1069; John Swift, "Letters from a Sailor on a Tinclad," edited by Lester L. Swift, *Civil War History*, X (March 1961), 55-56; Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War: Journeys Through the Battlefields in the Wake of Conflict* (3 vols.; Hartford, CT: T. Belknap, 1874, reprinted The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), III, 274; Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Histories of Arkansas; Fayetteville, AK: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), p. 119; Albert G. Castel, *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), pp. 196-197; William L. Shea, "Battle at Ditch Bayou," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XXXIX (Autumn 1980), 195-196; Edwards, *op cit.*, pp. 363-366; Robert L. Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy: The Trans-Mississippi South, 1863-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 323; Alfred T. Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters*. Vol. III of the *Navy in the Civil War* (New York: Scribner's, 1883), p. 212; Myron J. Smith, Jr., *The Timberclads in the Civil War: The Lexington, Conestoga and Tyler on the Western Rivers* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2008), p. 467. Shelby himself estimated that, at this time, there were over 10,000 draft dodgers and bushwhackers in the White River Valley. OR, I, 34, 1: 660.
- The 225-ton *Lebanon* was constructed at Brownsville, PA in 1855 and was impressed by the USQMD in early 1862. She had been carrying military supplies up and down the Mississippi ever since. Col. Parsons, the Federal army's western rivers transport czar, was blunt in stating the reason for her presence at Ford's; she was "captured and burned by guerrillas while in pursuit of cotton," he wrote. Frederick Way, Jr., comp., *Way's Packet Directory, 1848-1994* (2nd ed., Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1994), p. 281; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 2, 1864; Lewis B. Parsons, *Reports to the War Department* (St. Louis, MO: George Knapp & Co., 1867), p. 36; Edwards, *op cit.*, p. 364-366; Stephen B. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1961; Rpr. 1992), pp. 182-183.
- The brand-new 534-ton *Nicholas Longworth* was constructed at Cincinnati earlier in the year to run between the Queen City and New Orleans. For defense, she was armed with a single 6-pounder field piece on her main deck and a howitzer on her hurricane deck, both manned by volunteers. Way, *op cit.*, p. 347; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 5, 1864.
- U.S. Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (31 vols., Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1894-1922), Series I, Vol. 26: 305, 317, 323-324, 805; (cited hereafter as ORN, followed by a comma, the series number in Roman numerals, a colon, and the page in Arabic); Chester G. Hearn, *Ellet's Brigade: The Strangest Outfit of All* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), pp. 232-233; Shea, *loc cit.*; Jeffrey L. Patrick, "A Fighting Sailor on the Western Rivers: The Civil War Letters of 'Gunboat,'" *The Journal of Mississippi History*, LVIII (Fall 1996), 269-271; Don R. Simon, "Engagement at Old River Lake," *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1120> (accessed November 10, 2008). Greene informed Brig. Gen. Marmaduke that the *Cerulea* was "towed up to Napoleon seriously damaged." This was not accurate. ORN, I, 26: 803, 805.
- OR, I, 34, 1: 946-947; ORN, I, 26: 803, 805; Patrick, *op cit.*, 271-272; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 2, 5, 1864; *The New York Times*, June 4, 1864; Way, *loc cit.*; Hearn, *op cit.*, p. 233. Both the *Chicago* and copying New York newspapers incorrectly informed their readers that the battle was between 12 of Marmaduke's field pieces and the tinclads *Marmora*, *Juliet*, and *Prairie Bird*, with the latter struck 30 times before the trio "succeeded in driving them away."
- The 406-ton *Monarch* was constructed at Fulton, OH, near Cincinnati, in 1853; during the June 1862 naval battle of Memphis, she was particularly effective against the Confederate cotton-clad gunboats. Way, *op cit.*, pp. 328-329.
- In USQMD service during most of the Civil War, the *Rocket* was constructed at Brownsville, PA in 1856. Way, *op cit.*, p. 400.
- OR, I, 34, 1: 946-947, 951; ORN, I, 26: 326-327, 331, 335, 339, 803, 805-806; Hearn, *op cit.*, pp. 233-235; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 5, 1864; *St. Louis Daily Missouri Democrat*, May 30, 1864.
- Parsons, *loc cit.*
- ORN, I, 26: 806; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1864; Hearn, *op cit.*, p. 235. When Currie returned to Greenville, he sent a message to Owen at Skipwith's Landing informing him that Greene was at Sunnyside. Owen was reluctant to leave his anchorage for fear that Rebel cavalry would strike the naval anchorage and sink his barges and tugboats. ORN, I, 26: 339.
- Named for the daughter of her owner, Capt. John Carroll, the huge new sidewheeler *Pauline Carroll* was constructed at Cannelton, IN earlier in the year. With a displacement of 714 tons, the big St. Louis-New Orleans packet was 256 feet long, with a beam of 42 feet and a 7.7 foot draft. Way, *op cit.*, p. 364.
- ORN, I, 26: 804, 806; *Memphis Evening Times*, July 28, 1864; Shea, *op cit.*, pp. 196-197; Edwards, *op cit.*, pp. 366-370. There was no ironclad involved in this exchange. Though nowhere referenced, the vessel involved could have been the 410-ton sidewheel ram *Avenger*, which had just arrived at Greenville from Vicksburg. Constructed at New Albany, IN earlier in the year, the craft was 210 feet long with a 41.5 foot beam and a six foot draft. She was armed with one 100-pounder Parrott rifle, one 12-pounder Parrott rifle, and three 24-pounder smoothbore howitzers. ORN, II, 1: 41; Way, *op cit.*, p. 34.
- Named an Acting Ensign in October 1862, Gipson received his current rank a year later. His gallantry aboard the *Exchange* would be rewarded on July 9 with a promotion to the rank of Acting Volunteer Lt. He was honorably discharged in November 1865. Edward W. Callahan, *List of Officers of the Navy of the United States and of the Marine Corps, from 1775 to 1900, Comprising a Complete Register of All Present and Former Commissioned, Warranted, and Appointed Officers of the United States Navy, and of the Marine Corps, Regular and Volunteer. Compiled from the Official Records of the Navy Department* (New York: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1901; Reprint, New York: Haskell House, 1969), p. 220.
- ORN, I, 26: 354-355; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1864; Edwards, *op cit.*, p. 368; David Dixon Porter, *Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Sherman Publishing Company, 1886; Reprint, Secaucus, N.J.: Castle Books, 1984), pp. 560-561. Gipson remained aboard the *Exchange* making a slow recovery over the next several days. When Lt. Cmdr. Owen arrived off Columbia the next day, he found her "pretty badly cut up," but except for her inability to make full speed, she was ready for action. ORN, I, 26: 353.
- OR, I, 34, 1: 947-953, 971-985; OR, I, 34, 4: 137-138, 230-231 368; ORN, I, 26: 355-356, 364, 383-384, 407-408; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1864; Edwards, *op cit.*, pp. 368-377; Shea, *op cit.*, 197-207; Henry R. and Symmes E. Browne, *From the Fresh Water Navy, 1861-1864: Letters of Acting Master's Mate Henry R. Browne and Acting Ensign Symmes E. Browne*, edited by John D. Milligan, (Naval Letters Series, Volume 3; Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1970), pp. 288-289; Hearn, *op cit.*, pp. 234-243; Charles Dana Gibson, with E. Kay Gibson, *Assault and Logistics, Vol. 2: Union Army Coastal and River Operations, 1861-1866* (Camden, ME: Ensign Press, 1995), pp. 78-79.

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"THE FEDERALS FOUGHT LIKE DEVILS"

By Mark K. Christ



October 25, 1863, opened bright and sunny for the small Federal garrison at Pine Bluff, a pleasant town situated on the Arkansas River about 40 miles southeast of Little Rock. The men of the Fifth Kansas Cavalry and First Indiana Cavalry, tough veterans of dozens of scraps in Missouri and Arkansas, busied themselves with preparing their horses and equipment for a Sunday morning inspection. Citizens of Pine Bluff lit their stoves to cook

breakfast or prepared for Sabbath services. In camps on the outskirts of town, hundreds of African Americans, former slaves who had flocked to Pine Bluff for freedom and protection, likewise prepared themselves for a sunny Sunday morning.

On the Princeton Road southwest of Pine Bluff, Lt. Milton F. Clark led a company of the Fifth Kansas on a routine patrol into the countryside. As the Kansans sauntered down the road around 8 a.m., they were surprised to run into a solid column of gray-clad horsemen heading determinedly toward Pine Bluff. The Confederates fired on Clark's party. As the Kansas troops hesitated, wondering what to do next, a group of Rebels bearing a flag of truce approached Clark and demanded to be let through to Pine Bluff. Regaining his composure and angry that the same men who had fired on his command claimed to be a truce party, the lieutenant told the Southerners that he would request guidance from his headquarters before allowing them through. A.D. Brown of the Fifth Kansas reported that "after relieving themselves of a surplus of gas and empty bravado, [the Confederates] informed the Lieutenant that they were bearers

Pine Bluff Methodist Church

of dispatches from Marmaduke.” In fact, the horsemen were going to Pine Bluff to demand the surrender of the Yankee garrison. Clark stiffened in the saddle, glared at the Rebels, and snarled “Colonel Clayton never surrenders, but is always anxious for you to come and take him, and you must get back to your command immediately, or I will order my men to fire on you.” As a courier raced toward Pine Bluff, Clark and his men began skirmishing with the approaching Southerners. The nature of this Sunday morning had just changed.¹

At the advent of the Civil War, Pine Bluff was a prosperous river town, the county seat of Jefferson County and the hub of one of the state’s richest cotton-producing regions. Texan W.W. Heartsill, visiting the town in late 1862, wrote “I am very much surprised by the City-like appearance of Pine Bluff, it can boast of several thousand inhabitants and several magnificent buildings; nice clean streets, and all in all a well-governed place.” Another Texan observed that “some of the residences are very fine, and built of brick. Delightful gardens, tasteful lawns, and spacious streets, give the whole place an air of comfort and elegance.” More importantly, he noted, “the river was navigable to this place at all seasons of the year.”²

The town was left defenseless after a Union army under Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele captured Little Rock on September 10, 1863. Soon after, a Union officer reported, “a deputation of Citizens was sent from Pine Bluff to request Genl. Steele to occupy Pine Bluff by his forces,

and prevent the destruction of property and the Conscription of unwilling Citizens into the Confederate Army.” Mindful of the political advantages of addressing the needs of Pine Bluff’s Unionists and businessmen, Steele dispatched a battalion of the Fifth Kansas Cavalry to Bluff on September 14. The Kansans “took possession of the place ... without meeting with the slightest resistance, the citizens generally giving our Soldiers a friendly reception, throwing open their houses and inviting them to partake of the best their larders contain,” Kansan William Creitz reported. Three days later, the rest of the Fifth rode to Pine Bluff to establish a permanent garrison. Several days later the First Indiana Cavalry, old comrades from operations around Helena, joined the Kansans.³

The Fifth Kansas had earned a reputation in east Arkansas as tough fighters and for ruthlessness in dealing with secessionist civilians. Their first several days in Pine Bluff did not endear them to the population, with Mrs. Arabella Lanktree Wilson writing that “all the next 2 or 3 days they were going round stealing horses, they did not leave one in the town—hunting up firearms, & taking every thing else they thought proper.” Trooper August Bondi of the Fifth allowed that he had to “assist two Jehudins to their horses taken by Company F boys,” a kindness that led to an invitation to “rash hashono dinner with Mr. Kohn.” Mrs. Wilson noted that Clayton received so many complaints “that he put a stop to it & allowed a great number to get back their horses,” adding that the Federal commander “is

► **Henri de Tonti (1649/50-1702)** was an Italian-born soldier, explorer, and fur-trader in the service of the French, who helped establish the first permanent European settlement in the lower Mississippi River Valley in 1686, a settlement later known as “Arkansas Post,” which was down-river from Pine Bluff.



a very gentlemanly man & by his humane & obliging manners has quite won the people.” The troops soon settled into the routine of garrison life—Bondi wrote that “the Regiment is quartered in deserted frame buildings” — and Captain John F. Youngs was soon musing “don’t know what the 5th will do for Excitement guess we will take to the union girls of th[e] Country they are affectionate in the extreme feast us on butter milk & corn dodgers wich by the way is the climax of Arkansaw hospitality.”⁴

As Powell Clayton’s cavalrymen got settled at Pine Bluff, an old enemy began making plans to crush the stronghold. John Sappington Marmaduke’s attack on Battery A at Helena on July 4, 1863, had been turned back in part because of the stubborn defense of the First Indiana and Fifth Kansas Cavalry. Following the loss of Little Rock, the Rebel cavalry had established cordons throughout southwest Arkansas to keep track of Yankee activity and keep them from attacking Confederate bases in the region. The tiny force’s isolated position at Pine Bluff offered an opportunity to take revenge on the Union regiments and to disrupt Federal control of the Arkansas River line.

The Confederate began gathering information about the Federal defenses at Pine Bluff. Two Texas cavalrymen pretended to haul wood for the garrison’s use, their commander wrote, and “they went, acted well their part,

▼ **General Frederick Steele (1819-1868)** received a delegation of citizens from Pine Bluff, requesting the occupation of the town by U.S. troops.





▲ *Triumphant troops of the Third Minnesota Infantry enter Little Rock. The capital fell on September 10, 1863.*

▼ *Major Thomas W. Scudder, commanding the 5th Kansas, had helped fugitive slaves prior to the war, on at least one occasion working with John Brown.*



got what information I wanted and reported to me—which consisted of the number of cannon—where planted—the number of troops—and where camped—where headquarters were—etc. This information I sent by courier to Genl. Marmaduke.” Teenager Benjamin Riggs of Pine Bluff carefully observed Union preparations, then slipped out of town to ride 60 miles to Colton Greene’s headquarters in Princeton. “I explained everything I knew about the Federals in Pine Bluff,” Riggs wrote, “The number of troops, where the Battery was parked. I told him that the place could be easily taken, and surprised. I suspected that they were aiming to attack Pine Bluff, though [Greene] gave me no intimation.”⁵

Marmaduke gathered his officers at Princeton on the evening of October 23 and ordered three days’ rations cooked for the 2,300 horsemen in

his two divisions. The men were to be issued ammunition, but the supply strapped Confederates could only provide twenty-five rounds per man instead of the standard forty. By 9 a.m. the next morning all of the troops were assembled and ordered to head north. Six hours later the column halted at the Saline River and Marmaduke explained his strategy for attacking Pine Bluff.⁶

Marmaduke announced that he would continue following the Princeton Road with Colton Greene’s Missouri brigade and Col. John C. Monroe’s Arkansas brigade to attack the river town from the west. Robert C. Newton would lead a division comprised of Major John Bull’s brigade of Arkansas horsemen, Maj. B.D. Chenoweth’s Texas brigade, and a battalion of Missourians under Maj. Robert C. Wood to split from the main force at Cantrell’s Springs and hit Pine Bluff from the southeast. Between them, they would either crush Clayton’s

brigade within the city or drive them across the Arkansas River.⁷

The Confederates crossed the Saline and began a miserable march into a cold October night. The Saline bottoms were soon rendered nearly impassable by the passage of thousands of horses and mules, and the artillerymen hauling Marmaduke’s twelve cannon had to request the assistance of their mounted comrades to force the guns forward. The temperature continued to drop and, Col. Gideon Thompson reported, “near midnight . . . the intense coldness drove many of the thinly clad soldiers to building fires by the roadside whenever a halt in front admitted of the delay. Cold, weary, and sleepy, the march became tedious and irksome in the extreme.” It was daylight before Newton’s troops reached Cantrell’s Springs, from which the Confederates would disperse to their attack positions.⁸

Newton’s horsemen peeled off

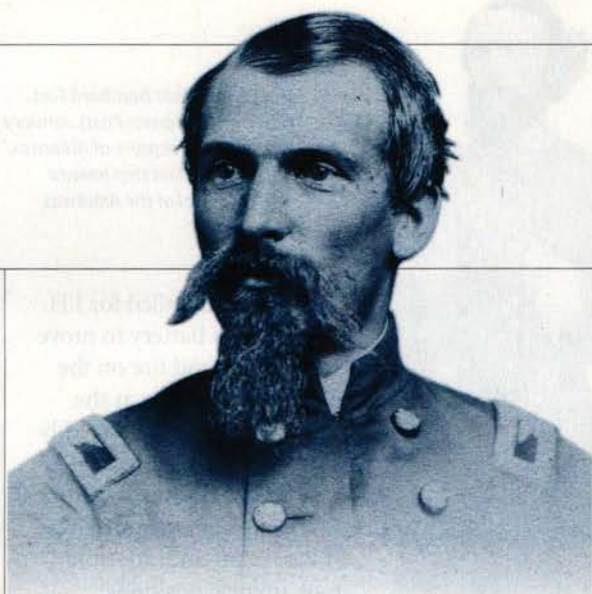
onto back roads to hit the Bayou Bartholomew Road from which they would approach Pine Bluff from the southeast. Monroe's Arkansawyers and Gideon Thompson's Missourians headed for the Little Rock Road to hit the town from the northwest, while Greene's men continued up the Princeton Road. A cannon shot from Greene's column would be the signal for the three columns to roar into Pine Bluff and destroy Clayton's small garrison. The Confederates were riding to their respective positions when Lieutenant Clark's patrol of Kansans ran into the Rebel vanguard and the essential element of Marmaduke's strategy—surprise—was lost.

At his Pine Bluff headquarters, Clayton heard the rattle of gunfire and surmised that a Rebel force was moving to the attack. The colonel considered his assets. He commanded 550 men of the Fifth Kansas and First Indiana Cavalry, veteran campaigners and experienced and fierce fighters, as well as around 50 men in a home-guard company under Captain R. Murphy. He also had six mountain howitzers and three rifled steel cannon. In addition, hundreds of black men in the contraband camps around Pine Bluff could be brought in to assist in the town's defense and Pine Bluff's warehouses were bulging with heavy bales of cotton. Pine Bluff's layout—which Kansan A.D. Brown described as "built, as near as practicable, on the Southern plan for rural villages, namely: a court house and square form the center, and the town grouped all around ... except on the north side where the river

forms the boundary"—also provided the basis for a strong defensive position.⁹

Clayton began shouting orders. The cavalymen of the First Indiana were ordered to assemble at the courthouse, corralling their mounts on the building's lot. Two companies of the Hoosier troopers were ordered out "to feel the enemy and notice his movement," two companies were positioned in and atop the courthouse to act as sharpshooters, and two companies were sent out as skirmishers, to fall back if pressured and occupy the houses around the square "and to hold them at all hazards." He ordered 300 men from the contraband camps to begin rolling cotton bales out of the warehouses and setting them up as barricades on the streets leading into the square, then ordered his cannon placed where they would have a clear field of fire on those streets. He also sent 200 contrabands to begin gathering water from the Arkansas River and to "fill all the barrels they could find, so that, if necessary, I could hold out two days, even though cut off from the river." Maj. Thomas W. Scudder, commanding the Fifth Kansas, sent two companies out to the skirmish line while the remainder were positioned where they could support the Federal artillerymen. The defenders of Pine Bluff checked their weapons and waited. Though outnumbered four to one, they were ready.¹⁰

Outside of town, Col. Robert R. Lawther, commanding Greene's brigade, ordered two companies forward in an attack that sent Clark's patrol reeling, leaving two Kansans dead and four wounded. The Missourians



▲ Colonel (later brigadier general) Powell Clayton (1833-1914).

continued forward until about a mile from the courthouse where they again encountered Yankee skirmishers—this time Clark's men were reinforced by two companies of the Fifth Kansas. Lawther dismounted Maj. Leonidas A. Campbell's regiment and Col. Merritt L. Young's battalion and deployed them on either side of the road; Col. Solomon G. Kitchens' regiment remained on horseback, ready to exploit any openings in the Federal line. The Rebels advanced, driving the Kansas troops back into the Pine Bluff square before taking positions about 150 yards away where they "remained during the engagement, a portion of my command being deployed as skirmishers and doing good execution whenever the enemy dared to show themselves above their works."¹¹

Colonel Newton's brigade had moved into position in Clay's brickyard, about one-half mile from Pine Bluff. The Arkansas colonel dismounted Chenoweth's Texans, Wood's Missouri battalion, and Bull's Arkansans, leaving 100 of the latter mounted to attack the Federal pickets and alert the Confederates if Clayton should attempt to flee across the Arkansas. Hearing the signal gun at 9 a.m., Newton ordered Wood to advance up the Bayou Bartholomew Road, with Chenoweth advancing on

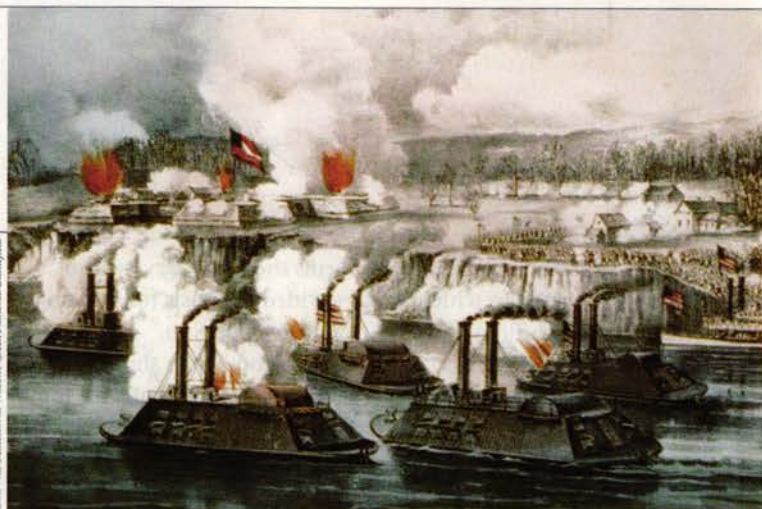


▲ Colonel (later brigadier general) Colton Greene CSA (1833-1900).



▲ **Brigadier General (later major general) John S. Marmaduke (1833-1887)**, commander of the Confederate assault on Pine Bluff, and a future governor of Missouri.

► *U.S. ironclads bombard Fort Hindman (Arkansas Post), January 10, 1863. The capture of Arkansas Post was the first step toward Union control of the Arkansas River Valley.*



Civil War Museum at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield

their right. He called for J.H. Pratt's Texas Battery to move to the front and fire on the Union skirmishers as the other Rebels moved steadily forward. The Confederates forced the skirmishers from the houses on the outskirts of Pine Bluff and, after they took up new positions, Newton "pushed forward my skirmishers and charged with Wood's and Chenoweth's commands, driving the enemy through the houses and inclosures in the town." Spying the daunting cotton barricades on the courthouse square, he ordered a halt and determined "to push my sharpshooters up

The combat at Pine Bluff on October 25, 1863, was unique in Arkansas's Civil War history in that it was the only action of any consequence fought in an urban environment, and the citizens of the town were among the few in the state to experience first-hand the terror of battle.

As Gen. John S. Marmaduke's Confederates encircled the town, one Union officer wrote, "Col Clayton had directed all women and children to be sheltered under the river bank as a protection from the shots of the contending parties. It was a Cold raw October day, and many suffered Extremely from Cold as well as fear." As the Rebels took their positions, "they had a view of all under the bank and upon whom ... they kept a murderous cross fire ... [which made] it necessary to place the women and children as far as possible in the small ravines formed by water running down the steep and caving banks of the river," he wrote.¹

Others trusted their luck in town. Mrs. Arabella Lanktree Wilson wrote that she "staid at home, until the bullets were whizzing past the house and into the yard. I then went over to Jaques [Jacob] Blooms ... house & remained there with them all the time. Their house was not injured, though very few excaped." Despite the heavy fire, Kansan A.D. Brown wrote, "we have no casualties to report among the citizens, and it seems providential that many were not killed ... Many narrow escapes are chronicaled and we hear of one woman having the knot of hair at the back of her head entirely cut away by a fugitive shot."²

as close to the enemy as could be done without too much exposure." Newton's men commenced sniping, waiting to see how things developed with the other attacking columns.¹²

John C. Monroe, holding position on the extreme Confederate left, dismounted his Arkansas troops, while Thompson's Missourians formed on his left, dispatching one company to hold Monroe's right flank. On hearing Greene's signal gun, the brigade moved forward. Thompson's command encountered one of the contraband camps on Pine Bluff's perimeter, which "here was taken possession of, containing tents, various articles of clothing, &c, with horses, mules, and wagons; also many negroes." The Missourians dismounted and the brigade continued on. Monroe's "skirmishers encountered the skirmishers of the enemy and drove them steadily back until within a short distance of their fortifications, when a destructive fire was poured into my ranks from the buildings and fortifications." The Confederates fell back to better cover and Monroe ordered Captain W.M. Hughey to bring his battery forward and open fire on the Yankees. "My dismounted men were not engaged again during the day," Monroe reported, and Marmaduke would see little more aggressive action from the troopers holding his left.¹³

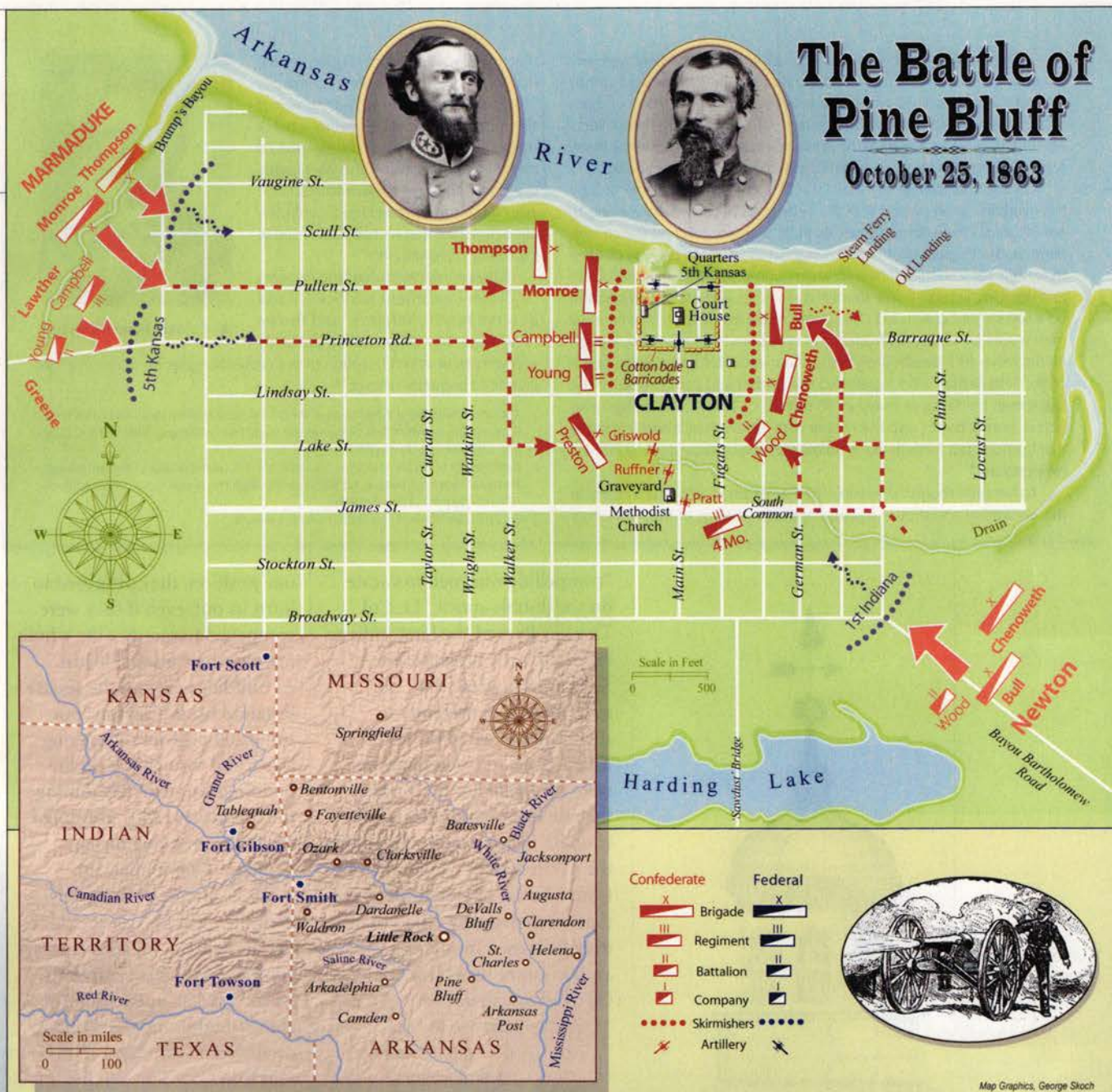
Inside the Federal fortifications, Clayton's men were taking a pounding. A Fifth Kansas trooper reported that Confederate artillery shells "carried away a leg each on two men; another carried away a man's head; a third killed a man after glancing from a tree; and a fourth passed through an opening in the barricades, exploded in our midst, killing three and severely wounding several others." A First Indiana soldier "was prostrated by a spent round shot, which struck him on the face and neck; after lying a few minutes, to all appearances dead, he rose deliberately and resumed his gun."¹⁴

Another danger surfaced as the rifle and cannon fire set the cotton barricades ablaze. August Bondi of Company K, Fifth Kansas, fell back with his comrades from one burning position, but Clayton ordered "all bales at the old barricade removed and fired at several places for quick consumption, else the Confederate sharpshooters should profit by them." Bondi organized twenty men from the contraband camps into three parties to break up the old barricades. As "we fairly flew toward the bales left at the old barricade," Bondi wrote, seven of the black men were shot down. "The balance with me at the barricade tied the ropes to three bales respectively and pulled them by main strength in three

1. H.B. Allis to Dear Sir, Feb. 17, 1867, Horace Allis Letters, Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.
2. James W. Leslie, ed. "Arabella Lanktree Wilson's Civil War Letter," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (autumn 1988): 267-268; "Battle of Pine Bluff: The Yankee View," *Jefferson County Historical Quarterly*, 17, no. 1 (1989): 13.

The Battle of Pine Bluff

October 25, 1863



directions, the bales sheltering the pulling crews, set fire to them and to all remaining bales, the smoke hiding us from the sharpshooters more or less and so without the loss of another man I succeeded.”¹⁵

Marmaduke assessed the situation, finding “a breastwork of cotton bales, two bales high and forming a continuous protection from all sides liable to be attacked ... the surrounding houses were occupied by sharpshooters, and their artillery was trained to command every street.” Seeing that direct

assault would be disastrous, “I then determined to keep up a continuous [artillery] fire upon the courthouse and fort, [attempting] if possible to batter down the court-house, fire the cotton and in the confusion charge and storm the works.” The Rebels determined that the best position for their cannon to fire on the heart of the Union defenses would be on the grounds of the wood-frame Methodist church and its adjacent cemetery. Colton Greene ordered Samuel T. Ruffner to deploy the three guns of his Missouri battery

at the church while Daniel B. Griswold set his light battery up to their left. Pratt’s Texas Battery was soon ordered to join them from Newton’s position on the Confederate right. The Rebels began to pour shells into the Yankee defenses.”¹⁶

The artillery was effective. One Union officer wrote that the cannon “sent its solid shot and shell crashing through the Courthouse and ... buildings in their range and into the open square among the corral’d Cavalry horses.” Shell after shell crashed into the courthouse,



▲ Colonel Robert C. Newton

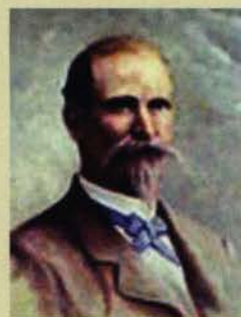
Though no organized units of African-American soldiers were engaged in the battle of Pine Bluff, the men from the contraband camps around the town played a critical role in the fight. While many of them helped to fortify the courthouse square with cotton-bale breastworks and others hauled water from the Arkansas River to fight fires in the town, several engaged in face-to-face battle with their Confederate attackers.

On the Confederate left, Maj. John P. Bull received orders to occupy the riverbank amid rumors that the Federal garrison was attempting to retreat across the Arkansas River. As Bull's men approached the contraband bucket brigade, the freedmen manhandled cotton bales to create a makeshift barricade and fifteen of them who were armed opened fire. "I remained in this position for about forty minutes, and the enemy keeping up a severe fire, I concluded I had better move my position to where my men would be protected from the enemy's fire," Bull reported, though he did leave 40 sharpshooters along the riverbank. Captain John Talbot of the Fifth Kansas, who supervised the contraband camps, praised the black men for "firing as many as 30 rounds ... None of them had ever before seen a battle, and the facility with which they labored and the manly efforts put forth to aid in holding the place exceeded my highest expectations."¹

Other men fought alongside the Fifth Kansas and First Indiana at the barricaded courthouse square. Capt. John Youngs of the Fifth wrote

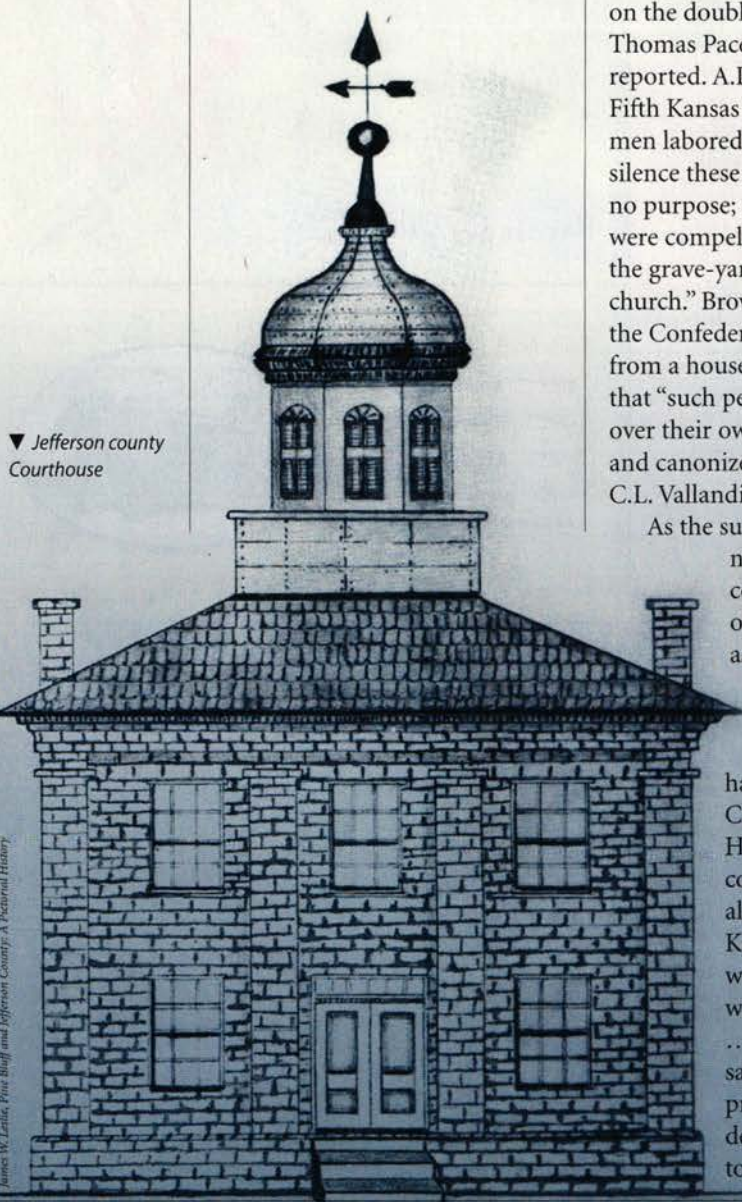
that "my Black Boy Billy did good service during the fight he handled his sharpes Rifle with great coolness." A.D. Brown of the Fifth remembered seeing a black man "seize the long gun of a captured prisoner, and scanning the barricades, disappear among the skirmishers. Soon after he returned, marching a confederate before him that he had succeeded in capturing and disarming."²

Clayton reported that "the negroes ... did me excellent service ... and deserve much therefore" and Brown concluded that "they worked patiently, and with an unselfish devotion to our cause that goes far to remove the jaundiced prejudice of color."³



▲ Colonel Powell Clayton

1. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, in *The Civil War CD-Rom* (Carmel, Ind.: Guild Press of Indiana, 1996) Series 1, 22 (1): 737, 725. Hereafter cited as *OR*;
2. Capt. Youngs to My Siss Mary, Nov. 15, 1863, John F. Youngs Civil War Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, p. 82; "Battle of Pine Bluff: The Yankee View," *Jefferson County Historical Quarterly*, 17, no. 1 (1989): 8.
3. *OR*, 22(1): 724; "Battle of Pine Bluff: The Yankee View," 8.



▼ Jefferson county Courthouse

"compelling our men to vacate on the double-quick," Lt. Col. Thomas Pace of the First Indiana reported. A.D. Brown of the Fifth Kansas wrote that "our men labored persistently to silence these two guns, but to no purpose; to reach them we were compelled to fire across the grave-yard and through the church." Brown was outraged that the Confederates would open fire from a house of worship, fuming that "such people would botanize over their own mother's grave, and canonize Judas Iscariot or C.L. Vallandigham."¹⁷

As the sun rose toward noon, Marmaduke considered his options. His ground assault was stalemated by the strong Federal works and his artillery had failed to dislodge Clayton's defenders. He determined a new course of action. The always indignant Kansan A.D. Brown wrote that "the town was fired in several ... places at the same time, and their programme began to develop itself. Failing to drive us from

our position, they proposed to burn us out, even if they were compelled to sacrifice the whole town to their insatiable lust." As buildings around the square began to blaze, Clayton "put some 200 negroes to carrying water and throwing it on the buildings immediately joining the square, and thus prevented the fire from doing me any damage." One soldier, Sgt. Jacob D. Orcutt of Company D of the Fifth Kansas, joined the firefighters. An admiring comrade wrote that "amid the fire of rebel sharpshooters, he climbed upon the jail roof and drenched it with water to prevent that from catching; he then made his way to the top of a large two story and a half house, and by his diligence he preserved that. To him we are indebted for the preservation of one whole side of the courthouse square."¹⁸

The incendiary tactic proved more dangerous to the attackers than to the garrison. One Confederate captain "was pierced by three balls simultaneously either of which was mortal with his torch in his hand he met his death which continued burning until the hand that held it was blacked by smoke and fire." Other wounded Confederates, trapped in the blazing quarters



◀ The Courthouse today (a) close-up, (b) as seen looking along Main Street.

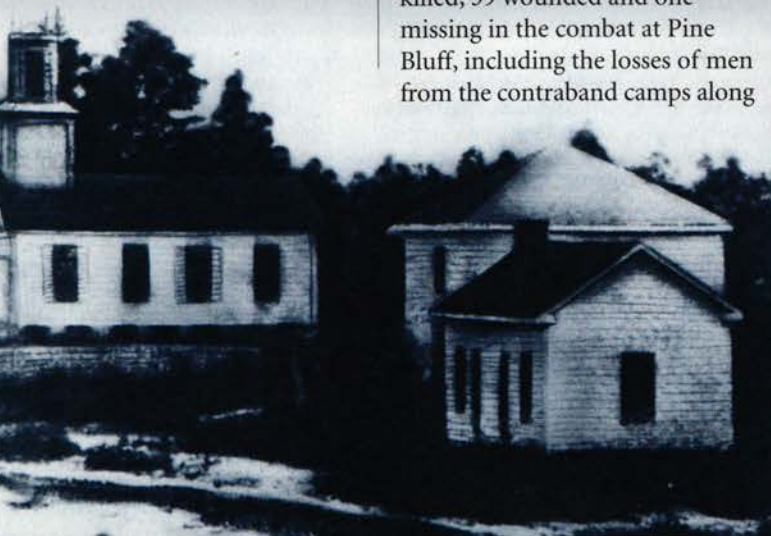
of the Fifth Kansas, "were burned to death, and almost entirely consumed by the flames that he kindled," Clayton reported. Alarmed by the braying of the regimental mule herd, several Kansans raced to the building where they were held and, A.D. Brown wrote, "we were obliged to cut them loose to prevent their burning up and they sloped with the graybacks much to our disgust."¹⁹

By mid-afternoon, as the fires in Pine Bluff began to diminish, Marmaduke determined that "the Federals could only be captured by storming the works, which would have cost me at least 500 men. I did not think it would pay." Reluctantly, the Confederate general ordered his cavalrymen to retreat by the routes by which they had advanced. The Rebels began an orderly withdrawal, seizing horses and mules, taking everything they could carry from the camps of the contrabands and the First Indiana and burning the remainder. Maj.

Thomas Scudder led a force of the always belligerent Fifth Kansas in pursuit of the retreating Confederates but after a sharp skirmish fell back to town as the Southerners continued heading south.²⁰

The fierce fighting on October 25 devastated Pine Bluff. Arabella Lanktree Wilson wrote that the Confederates "burned down the whole of front street ... The Methodist Church is riddled throughout & the whole town utterly spoiled." Clayton reported that "There is scarcely a house in town that does not show the effects of the battle." Capt. John Youngs put things in perspective for the defenders, writing "I lost on the day of the fight all my company Books & records, all my private property Trunk clothes one gold watch &c &c ... all the Officers in Our Regt with a few exceptions lost their baggage & clothing, but all considered we were satisfied to get off as Cheaply as we did."²¹

Clayton reported 16 men killed, 39 wounded and one missing in the combat at Pine Bluff, including the losses of men from the contraband camps along



▼ Arkansas State House.



The commanders of the opposing forces at Pine Bluff on October 25, 1863, had one thing in common: Both would later be elected governor of their state.

After the war, Powell Clayton settled on a plantation near Pine Bluff that he had purchased during the war's last year. In 1867, he took a prominent role in the formation of the state Republican Party and was elected governor of Arkansas, taking office on July 2, 1868. As governor, Clayton acted aggressively when the Ku Klux Klan terrorized Republicans and African-American freedmen during the presidential election of 1868. The new governor called out the state militia and used it to quell violent outbreaks around Arkansas and declared martial law in fourteen counties to crush Klan activity. Opponents in the legislature attempted to impeach him, but Clayton survived the move, as he did an assassination attempt. The legislature elected him to the U.S. Senate in 1871 and he held that seat until being defeated in a re-election bid in 1877. A continuing force in the Republican Party, Clayton served as the U.S. ambassador to Mexico from 1897 until 1905, after which he lived in Washington, D.C. He died on Aug. 25, 1914, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.¹

John Sappington Marmaduke may well have been the best-educated general in the Confederacy, having attended classes at Yale and Harvard before his appointment to the U.S. Military Academy. He returned to Missouri after the war, where he went into business as a commission merchant and insurance agent before editing the *St. Louis Journal of Agriculture* from 1871 to 1874. He served as a member of the Missouri Railway Commission from 1880 to 1885. Marmaduke ran an unsuccessful campaign to be the Democratic candidate for governor of Missouri in 1880, but won the role and the governorship four years later, taking office in January 1885. As governor, Marmaduke fought for railroad regulation and successfully suppressed an explosive railroad strike with no loss of life. The former general died of pneumonia on Dec. 28, 1887, before his term ended. He is buried at Woodland Cemetery in Jefferson City, Missouri.²

1. Carl H. Moneyhon, "Powell Clayton (1833-1914)," in the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* found at <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=94>, accessed July 25, 2010.
2. Edwin C. Bearss, "John Sappington Marmaduke" in William C. Davis and Julie Hoffman, eds, *The Confederate General* (Harrisburg, PA: National Historical Society, 1991) 4:155-157.



◀ "Although, upon a summer's day,
You'll lightly turn from me away;
When autumn leaves are scattered wide,
You'll often linger by my side;
But when the snow the earth doth cover,
Then you'll be my ardent lover." poem attributed to Powell Clayton.

with his regulars. The Yankees had lost hundreds of horses and mules, as well as the majority of their regimental supplies and property. Still, the Federals were elated with their victory, with Clayton writing that "the fact that so small a force kept four

times their number at bay for five hours, and finally drove them from the field, bespeaks for the whole command greater efficiency and gallantry than words can do."²²

Marmaduke's casualties were higher. He reported 18 men killed, 67 wounded and 16 missing, but also claimed that "we burned 1,000 bales of cotton, all their quartermaster and commissary stores, and some ordnance stores, brought away 300 Federal horses and mules, killed and scattered 200 more, captured and brought off about 100 Negroes, destroyed the Negro camps (bringing off many tents), and scattered the Negroes." These accomplishments meant little to his demoralized men. J.M. Bolton of the Tenth Missouri Cavalry wrote that "the PB battle was a complete failure on our part. There was lots of grumbling among the men after the fight [who] didn't thing (sic) it was managed right. Our

only thought was to capture the place but we were doomed to failure after surprising them at that." Engineer Henry Merrell faulted Marmaduke, saying "he summoned the town to surrender, when he could have gone in without permission," and Texan Buck Walton concluded that "the result was about eight hundred men whipped at least 2500 of as good men as we had."²³

The battle of Pine Bluff was the last combat of any consequence in Arkansas in 1863. While it was of little strategic consequence, it did underscore that fact that Union armies had conquered and held the line of the Arkansas River Valley during that year, and that most organized Confederate units were now confined to the southwestern part of the state. For the men who fought at Pine Bluff, the battle was either a crushing disappointment or a thrilling victory. John Sappington Marmaduke paid tribute to both at the end of his report on the battle, writing "My troops behaved well. The Federals fought like devils."²⁴

Mark K. Christ is Community Outreach Director for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Department of Arkansas Heritage, Little Rock, and a member of the Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission. He is the author of several books on Arkansas history, the latest of which is *Civil War Arkansas, 1863: The Battle for a State*.

NOTE

1. "Battle of Pine Bluff: The Yankee View," *Jefferson County Historical Quarterly*, 17, no. 1 (1989): 6; Edwin C. Bearss, "Marmaduke Attacks Pine Bluff," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 23, No. 4 (winter 1964): 298.
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3. H.B. Allis to Dear Sir, Feb. 17, 1867, Horace Allis Letters, Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library; William F. Creitz Diary, William F. Creitz Papers, Kansas State Historical Society, 11; Bearss, "Marmaduke Attacks Pine Bluff," 292.
4. James W. Leslie, ed. "Arabella Lanktree Wilson's Civil War Letter," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (autumn 1988): 263; "Personal Reminiscences of August Bondi," August Bondi Papers,

- 1833-1907, Kansas State Historical Society, chap. 4, p. 39; Capt. Youngs to Brother Thos, Oct. 1, 1863, John F. Youngs Civil War Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, p. 78.
5. Buck Walton, *An Epitome of My Life: Civil War Reminiscences* (Austin, TX: Waterloo, 1965): 72; Benjamin J. Riggs, "Autobiographical Sketch," Tennessee State Library and Archives, p. 6.
6. Bearss, "Marmaduke Attacks Pine Bluff," 295-295.
7. Bearss, "Marmaduke Attacks Pine Bluff," 295.
8. Janet B. Hewett, ed. *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot, 1996) 4 (1): 160; Bearss, "Marmaduke Attacks Pine Bluff," 295; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, in *The Civil War CD-Rom* (Carmel, Ind.: Guild Press of Indiana, 1996) Series 1, 22 (1): 733. Hereafter cite as OR; all references are to series 1.
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10. OR, 22(1): 723, 725-726.
11. OR, 22(1): 732-733; Campbell commanded Greene's Regiment during the battle; Bearss, "Marmaduke Attacks Pine Bluff," 300-301.
12. OR, 22(1): 734-735; Bearss, "Marmaduke Attacks Pine Bluff," 296-297.
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14. "Battle of Pine Bluff," 8, 13.
15. "Personal Reminiscences of August Bondi," Bondi Papers, ch. 5, p. 1.
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17. H.B. Allis to Dear Sir, Feb. 17, 1867, Allis Letter; OR, 22(1): 726; "Battle of Pine Bluff," 8.
18. "Battle of Pine Bluff," 9; OR, 22(1): 723; Alice L. Fry, *Following the*

- Fifth Kansas Cavalry: The Letters* (Independence, Mo.: Two Trails, 1998): 51.
19. H.B. Allis to Dear Sir, Feb. 17, 1867, Allis Letter; Clayton reported that "when the fire was raging, the mules were cut loose to keep them from burning, and 62 are missing." OR, 22(1): 724; "Battle of Pine Bluff," 13.
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21. Leslie, "Arabella Lanktree Wilson's Civil War Letter," 267; OR, 22(1): 724; Capt. Youngs to Siss Mary, Nov. 15, 1873, Youngs Civil War Collection.
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"WHEN ALL BUT LIFE AND HONOR'S LOST"¹

Major Henry Clay Robinett and the Civil War

BILL SPEER

▲ *Major Henry Clay Robinett and the Civil War*

What drives an active duty soldier to commit suicide? Today the U.S. Army struggles with this question without a definitive answer; at the time of the Civil War the Army did not even acknowledge the issue. Major Henry Clay Robinett, 1st U.S. Infantry, fell victim to the failure of the Army to effectively deal with the mental health issues encountered by many of its soldiers due to their war experiences.

Moving from boy to man in less than a decade, Robinett experienced more challenges and impediments in his seven year military career than most do in a lifetime. Born on 20 June 1841 into a decidedly middle class family, his roots extended back to Allen Robinett, who emigrated from England to America in 1682 at the age of fifty. Robinett's family boasted a long and proud military tradition from the time of the Revolution to the Civil War. This rich and deep military heritage played a major role in Robinett's life and instilled

within him a desire to serve the nation. His ambition and sense of duty, honor, and country, rooted within the branches of his family tree, moved him in 1856 to attend Delaware Military Academy (DMA) at the age of fifteen and eventually join the Union cause at the start of the Civil War.²

In a letter Henry wrote detailing his grades, he revealed his character, "I believe I have been perfect and conducted myself properly towards my Teacher."³ Time would prove Robinett to be a narcissist, compounding his problems during his military career. After graduation from DMA in the spring of 1861, Robinett's ambitions would not allow him to "settle" for a commission in the Delaware volunteers. Referring to his choice of a Regular Army commission over the Volunteers that many of his peers joined, Henry wrote, "I have followed my own inclinations, not their advice." He wrote his brother Theodore:

Perhaps I should have told you before, I went personally to the Secretary of War [Simon Cameron] and obtained my appointment. I could, I suppose as well have gotten a 1st Lieutenant as a 2nd but I preferred the latter in consideration of age etc, etc. I belong to the 1st Infantry Company C.⁴

His intense and passionate drive for fame and reward began to show.

Commissioned a Second Lieutenant in August of 1861, Henry was looking for a career that would bring him recognition and acknowledgement; he joined the 1st U.S. Infantry on 28 September. The regiment then stationed in Missouri, possessed a reputation as a solid, effective combat unit.⁵

By the spring of 1862, Robinett had taken part in a few small engagements. In March, his company, independently assigned during the siege of New Madrid, Missouri, manned siege artillery rather than performing the traditional functions of infantry. The 1st U.S. possessed a collection of siege guns: two 20-pounder Parrotts, four 30-pounder Parrotts, and four 24-pounder siege pieces.⁶ Robinett would later put these siege guns to good use and he called them his "pet Parrotts" and his "metallic friends."

Robinett and the 1st U.S. Infantry found themselves in front of the Confederate fortifications at Corinth on 15 May 1862, where their siege guns were used to some effect "doing considerable execution."⁷ On 30 May, the Confederate forces withdrew, and the battery "took station there." At this point in his career, he was well versed in the finer points of siege artillery. As his men prepared their fortifications, unbeknownst to him, the position they constructed would become the fulcrum of the Rebel assault on Corinth later in the year and alter his life in a dramatic fashion.

Battery Robinett was located 675 yards west of town and boasted three twenty-pound Parrotts, one facing northeast, one north, and one northwest. At 10 A.M., on 3 Oct. 1862, Confederate forces under the command of Major General Earl Van Dorn were but three miles northwest of Corinth and the assault began; initially planned as a double envelopment, the assault rapidly devolved into a frontal attack as



Union forces withdrew from the outer perimeter. Robinett saw little action that first day, throwing a few rounds in support of Union troops to his front. After the first day's engagement, the Confederate forces, just a few hundred yards from Corinth and exhausted from the day's heat and fight, sought to reorganize and prepare for the following day. Van Dorn ordered a dawn attack to take the town. In a telegram to Richmond, he wrote:

We have driven the enemy from every position. We are within three-quarters of a mile of Corinth. The enemy are huddled together about the town, trying to hold the position. Our loss, I am afraid, is heavy. It is near night. Lovell's and Price's troops have our thanks.⁸

Van Dorn was risking his entire command in order to take the vital crossroads. Union General William Rosecrans wrote that the men under his the command in the Army of the Tennessee "did not act or fight well." Yet he continued, "I think we shall handle them. We are at the outer line of works."⁹

As the events proved on 4 October, Battery Robinett was the focal point of the Rebel attack. If the Rebels could execute a breakthrough at this point, the entire Union line would collapse and, once again, Corinth would be in Confederate hands.

The 2nd Texas,¹⁰ led by Colonel William Peleg Rogers,¹¹ was poised to lead the assault on Battery Robinett. This assault would include one of the few actual bayonet fights in the war.¹²

Once out of the woods and formed, Rogers' men moved forward without the benefit of the traditional "Rebel yell." Captain Oscar Jackson, 63rd Ohio, in support of Battery Robinett, remembered:

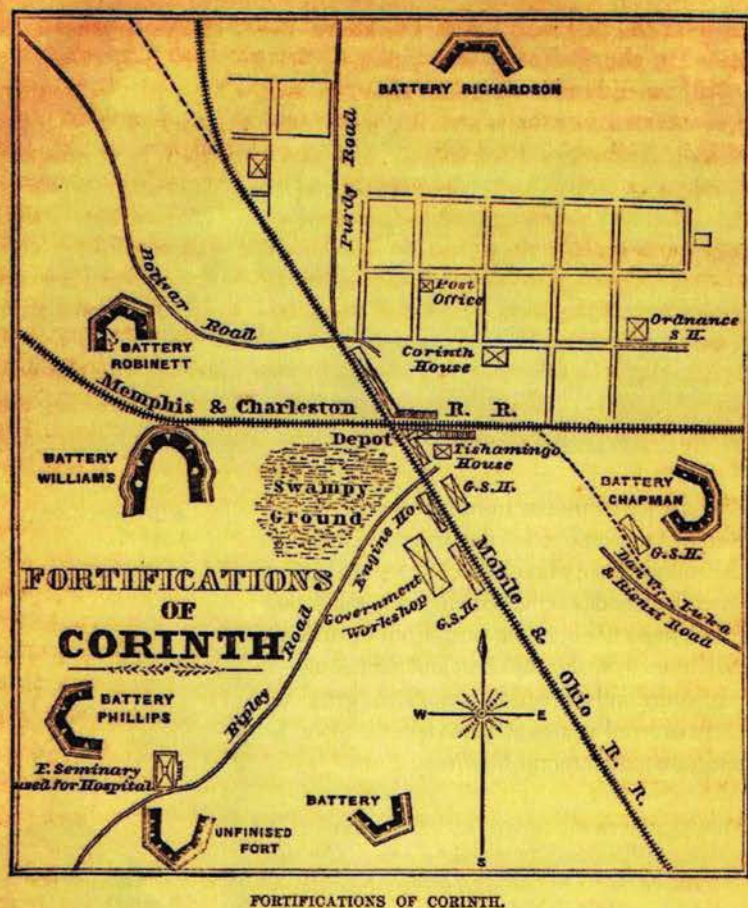
In my campaigning I had never seen anything so

▲ Delaware Military Academy.



▲ Robinett as a cadet at the Delaware Military Academy in 1860. This is the only known photograph of a cadet in Delaware Military Academy uniform.

◀ Earl Van Dorn.



▲ The Battle of Corinth..

*hard to stand as that slow, steady tramp. Not a sound was heard, but they looked as if they intended to walk over us. I afterwards stood a bayonet charge when the enemy came at us on the double-quick with a yell and it was not so trying on the nerves as that steady, solemn advance. I could see that my men were affected by it.*¹³

Robinett awaited Colonel Rogers and the Rebel onslaught as they moved into the abatis to his front. In his report of the engagement, Captain G. A. Williams, Robinett's commanding officer, detailed the fight at Robinett:

*During the time the enemy were being repulsed from the town my attention was drawn to the left side of the battery by the firing from Battery Robinett, where I saw a column advancing to storm it. After advancing a short distance they were repulsed, but immediately reformed, and, storming the work, gained the ditch, but were repulsed. During this charge 8 of the enemy, having placed a handkerchief on a bayonet and calling to the men in the battery not to shoot them, surrendered, and were allowed to come into the fort. They then reformed, and, restorming, carried the ditch and the outside of the work, the supports having fallen a short distance to the rear in slight disorder.*¹⁴

Colonel Rogers pressed the attack and

reached Battery Robinett, firing his pistol into the fortification as a few dozen of his men entered the position. Hand to hand fighting ensued. "One eyewitness stated that 'it seemed as though hell was holding a jubilee.' It was a bloody contest and we could see men using their bayonets like pitch forks and thrusting each other through."¹⁵ As members of the battery fell all around him, a Minnie ball struck Robinett, laying his scalp back and knocking him unconscious as he fell under one of the guns. Eventually the infantry units supporting Battery Robinett repulsed the Texans after a bloody hand to hand fight, and the assault faltered.

In the aftermath of battle, Robinett had his wound tended and on 28 October was granted leave, returning to Wilmington to complete his recovery with his family. In Wilmington, he received accolades as a war hero and a promotion to brevet captain for his "gallant, determined defense of Battery Robinett" at Corinth.¹⁶ Henry was sufficiently recovered by November 18th to petition the Lafayette Lodge #14 of the Delaware Freemasons for membership and was crafted and raised in the Lodge ten days later.¹⁷ This was one more component of his ambitious drive to build a successful professional military career.

Returning to the 1st U.S. Infantry in January of 1863, Robinett participated in the Vicksburg campaign where, once again, he encountered the 2nd Texas. This time, with reversed roles, his company supported the assault of the 14th Division of McClernand's Corps on the 2nd Texas lunette. Later, because of his service at Vicksburg, Brigadier General Eugene A. Carr recommended him for "two or more brevets." In a letter to Major General Rawlins, Chief of Staff to General Grant, he wrote:

*I mentioned him favorably in my official report... but it seems that the report never came before the commanding general... it must have worked a great injustice to the Officers and Soldiers of my Division as well as myself. Lieut Robinett showed great gallantry and skill during the whole time he was with me: particularly in taking up an advanced position during the night of May 19th and silencing the enemies batteries next morning, in exploding rebel magazines, in covering and supporting our troops during the assault of the 22 May and in being exposed to the fire of sharpshooters during the whole siege.*¹⁸

After the fall of Vicksburg, Robinett and the

1st U.S. Infantry, moved into garrison at New Orleans, the "Paris of America" as Henry called it.

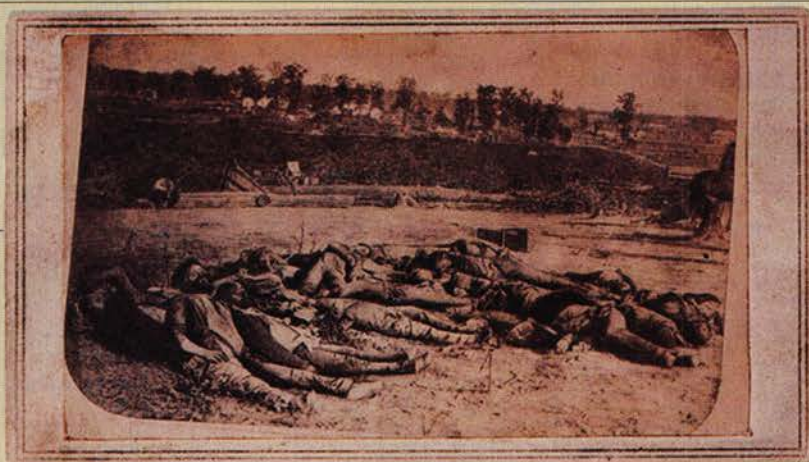
*We had our Siege guns turned over at Carrollton before leaving for that campaign. I grieved a good deal at their loss, for we had achieved such splendid results with them and had them so long that we formed quite an attachment for "own Pet Parrotts". They were needed for the fortifications so we yielded to the "military necessity" with as good grace as possible."*¹⁹

Robinett was not looking forward to life as an infantry officer and New Orleans was not to be as welcoming as he expected. He preferred to be with General Grant's command and let his dissatisfaction be known: "I do not like the Department as well as others I have served in. I would much prefer being in Gen. Grant's Command. We were all quite disappointed when we were transferred to this. We imagined as we had served so long under his command we would always campaign in it." During leave and recruitment duty in the winter of 1864, Robinett requested and was granted reassignment to Major General John McClernand's staff and was promoted to Captain of Volunteers, Aide de Camp. He remained on recruitment duty in Delaware for the first half of 1864 until he wrote personally to General Grant:

*I am extremely anxious, general, to be on duty in the field! I should be delighted to serve again under the eye of 'Our Old Commander' as it was my good fortune to do in the West . . . Could you not assign me to duty, general, according to my rank as Capt & A.D.C near yourself?"*²⁰

While there is no evidence to prove Robinett was aware of the deep rift between McClernand and Grant, it is obvious he knew with whom to position himself. Robinett was ecstatic when he obtained a minor position on Grant's staff as an assistant aide-de-camp. This was in no small part due to Brigadier General John A. Rawlins, Grant's Chief of Staff and a Freemason. His time on the staff was mostly uneventful, performing the mundane duties of a general's staff officer. On April 21, 1865, Robinett received promotion to brevet major on the recommendation of Grant, a position of which he was quite proud.²¹

The end of the war would find Robinett an "extra" aide-de-camp and as such, he was



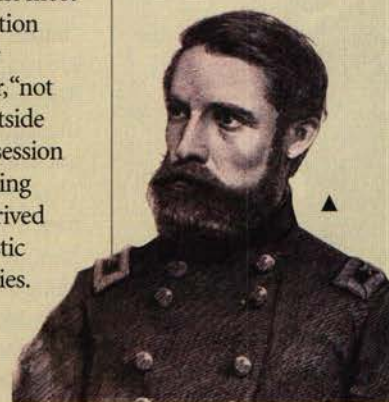
▲ Confederate dead in front of Battery Robinett.

released to the 1st U.S. Infantry still on garrison duty in New Orleans. Unfortunately, there were no available slots for a Captain, so Robinett was further reduced to 1st Lieutenant and assigned to his old unit. He wrote his brother:

*I have very pleasant times while on the Gen's staff. He gave me a brevet Major of Vols. That does me no good now however as the war is over. If I had had political influence I could at least have been a Brig-Gen two years ago. I don't say it vainly or boastingly. I know hundreds who have had it have been made Brig and Major Genls for less distinguished services than me over in this war."*²²

New Orleans after the war was a city in turmoil. Without a doubt, Louisiana had the most complex and tangled period of reconstruction of any Southern state.²³ Even with an early occupation of New Orleans during the war, "not a foot of Louisiana beyond the city and outside the range of Union cannon was left in possession of the federal forces."²⁴ Thrust into this roiling turmoil, 1st Lieutenant Henry Robinett arrived in New Orleans, ambitious as ever, optimistic about his future, and confident in his abilities. He was stationed inside the city near Lafayette Square at Lafayette and Camp Streets, where his unit shared a building with a saloon and meeting hall.

Henry Robinett's first unfortunate encounter occurred on 10 November 1865 while he was loading his baggage into a wagon and was stopped by Major Maurice Maloney, a long-time officer in the 1st U.S. who had seen action with the unit throughout the war. Maloney was supervising the loading of a wagon when Henry approached and said, "I will put my baggage in the wagon." When the Major informed him he could not, he repeated the statement and added, "I would like to catch any person putting it out." And as Major Maloney recounted, "Along with other words in a disrespectful manner." He informed Robinett he should consider himself



Brigadier John A. Rawlins, Grant's chief of staff and a Freemason, was largely instrumental in securing a place on the staff for Robinett.

► **Grant's staff at City Point.** Robinett is in the front row, second from right.



▼ **Isaac d. DeRussy** (1840-1923) retired from the army as a brigadier general in 1902.



under arrest and in the presence of both other officers and civilians Henry replied, "You are not my commanding officer. I will not respect your authority. You are a damned fool" or other words to that effect.²⁵ Placed under arrest, Lieutenant Robinett was charged with "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline as well as using contemptuous and disrespectful language to his superior officer." Found guilty on both counts on 16 December Robinett was sentenced to suspension from rank, pay, and privileges for one month. Taken by itself, the case is of little consequence.

Yet, while this case was still under adjudication, another incident on Saturday, 25 November clearly demonstrated that something was amiss within Robinett. Evidently, Robinett invited two "veterans" into a bar for a drink where he encountered Henry Kessinger, bartender and brother of the owner. Kessinger refused to serve him as he appeared "intoxicated" (both enlisted men later testified that Lieutenant Robinett appeared drunk) and an enraged Robinett leaped the bar to serve himself. The officer of the day, Captain Isaac Denniston DeRussy²⁶ was called and another confrontation occurred. DeRussy and Henry Kessinger claimed that when he ordered the men to leave Robinett said, "You are not going to obey him, are you?" Robinett testified that he said, "You are going to obey him, aren't you?" DeRussy considered Robinett's behavior was "calculated to prejudice his authority over said enlisted men and incite a mutinous spirit on their part." He also believed that Robinett was intoxicated. Robinett was placed under arrest and another court martial was ordered for the month of December. He was charged with "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, and inciting a mutinous spirit on the part of enlisted men in his regiment."²⁷

During the trial, Robinett claimed that since the unit had been quartered in the same building as the saloon for so long numerous officers had "taken liberties" to move behind the bar and get their drinks themselves. He then bordered on the ridiculous by contending that when asking the enlisted men to have a drink with him, "it does not necessarily follow that a drink of liquor is intended...for it is courtesy

to allow the person to whom this invitation is extended to choose for himself whether his beverage shall be Cold Sparkling Water, Ruby Wine, Lemon Ade, Soda or Bourbon or Cognac!" Evidence in his defense also indicated that he had not been drinking before he entered the Kessinger tavern. He concluded his defense:

Remember, gentlemen, if you will, that the rebellion has scarcely closed, and how many fit associates for any men in our land, were during it found in the ranks of our army. Our relatives of every degree—our brothers: and in several instances, or occasions of great national danger, where the loyal north was invaded by Treason's minions—even our gray-haired and venerated fathers shouldered their musket and did noble service in defense of "the Government." And their homes and fire-sides! Shall we then bring such disgrace and odium on the name of the "American Soldier"—those who have served during the whole of "the great rebellion" as well as many years before—by deciding that it is unbecoming an officer and gentleman to ask one of these veterans marked by many a seamy scar to ask to take a drink: for so doing us basely show our appreciation for their noble and heroic conduct in the service of their country and to sustain the dignity of government and the majesty of its laws!

If we are so inclined, and judgment in the sentence of the trial be unfavorably to the accused, what man among that noble class of hero-patriot-citizen or regular-soldier will accept that good old and time honored maxim as truth "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" [It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country]²⁸ It smacks too much of the puffed and exclusive notions inculcated by the etiquette and customs of the "Aristocratical Service of European Despotism" to be so considered or decided.

The entire passage reads like the ramblings of a psychotic mind. One can only wonder how the officers of the court reacted to this diatribe. He ends his defense with reference to his

The evidence clearly showed that before arriving at the saloon Robinett had not been drinking.

upbringing as a gentleman, no doubt referring to his attendance at Delaware Military Academy.

We have not the least desire to convince the Court that we would be accredited to that school of so-styled gentleman, known as the affected, popinjay and foppish: but we do and will claim for him that he belongs to the "School of the true gentleman":-for he never on any occasion forgets his early education; or the inculcations fixed indelibly upon his youthful mind at the domestic fire-side, where he was bred in the "true school of the Gentleman!"

The court ignored all of Robinett's rambling appeal, found him guilty on all counts, and dismissed him from service in the United States Army. Additionally, when the Judge Advocate General reviewed the case he wrote to Lieutenant General Grant:

It may be remarked that this officer had been tried but a short time before the trial which resulted in his dismissal, by the same Court . . . and that his being soon brought again to trial, probably induced the severity of his sentence. It is for the Lieutenant General to decide whether the consideration of Lieut. Robinett's meritorious service during the war, which brought to his knowledge, can be deserved sufficient to call for his re-instatement in the service.

What can we learn from these two combined affairs about Henry Robinett and his vision of the world? The fact that the second one occurred before the first ended indicates a lack of self-control. Most soldiers under charge would try exceptionally hard to avoid another incident, yet Henry seems to incite the second, most definitely exhibiting abnormal behavior at the Kessinger saloon and in his altercation with Captain DeRussy. The evidence clearly showed before arriving at the saloon he had not been drinking yet he behaved as if he was intoxicated. His behavior seems out of character with his past but it is obvious that something had altered his state of mind.

Robinett returned to Wilmington in disgrace but not defeated. Through the efforts of Delaware senator George R. Riddle and, among others, General Rawlings, General Grant recommended mitigation of his conviction and he was ordered back to service on 24 April. By 13 May 1866 he had rejoined the 1st U.S. in New Orleans.

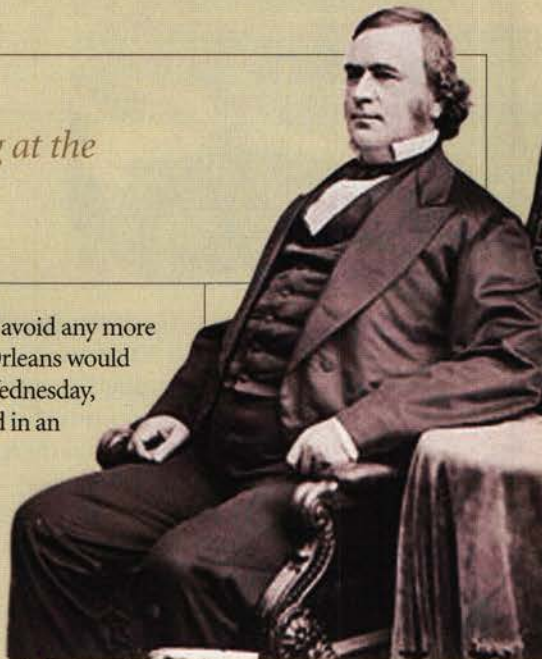
Having escaped "justice" one would expect

Robinett to walk a tight line and avoid any more incidents. Unfortunately, New Orleans would not allow him that luxury. On Wednesday, 13 October 1866, he was involved in an unprovoked confrontation near the Varieties Theater.²⁹ Quickly resolved, Robinett entered the theatre. Toward the end of the performances Henry was again accosted by an usher, two police officers (both former CS army soldiers), and eventually a large mob for merely applauding, albeit quite loudly, the performance. After being bitten on the thumb and struck with a billy club, Henry was ejected from the theater and taken to the chief of police who referred the matter to the nearest military camp where Robinett's old nemesis, Captain DeRussy was in command. After an intense verbal confrontation with DeRussy Robinett found himself again under DeRussy court martial charge:

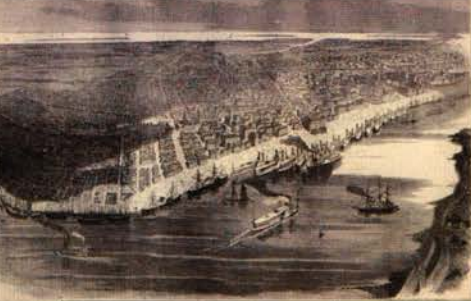
While in a state of intoxication behave in a manner so unbecoming (as to disrupt and annoy the audience and actors in the said theater); and when requested by the usher and police officer in attendance to desist from such conduct, did persist in making a disturbance (and did use loud and insulting language to said usher and police-officer), and did continue to behave in such an unbecoming manner (as to interrupt the performance on the stage) and to cause the said usher and police-officer to forcibly eject him from the said theatre, and to take him as a prisoner to the First District police station.³⁰

Once again, testimony conflicted as to whether he was intoxicated, with those that were in his company beforehand stating emphatically that he was not intoxicated. Robinett claimed, the affair at the Varieties Theatre was, "a sheer and wanton violation of the rights of a Gentleman, and stamps it as an uncalled for, brutal, outrageous, and Cowardly, and shameful attack upon an Officer of the United States Army, as such, the incentive to such an outrage, and the cause of the perpetration thereof, being the deeply rooted prejudices engendered in the bitter five Years War of Rebellion of the Southern States."

He concluded his defense by reminding the court of his service in the War and listing all of the engagements in which he participated as well as



▲ Senator Willard Saulsbury Sr.



◀ A postwar photograph of New Orleans.

his citations for gallantry at Corinth and Vicksburg. He also stated, "In order to fully comprehend the consequences of your decision in such a case, particularly if it be unfavorable to the accused, you must know the appropriate value and price of a Soldier's honor! A Soldier is the only man of all men, who feels himself rich indeed, 'when all but life and honor's lost!' But to the Soldier All things Else sink into insignificance in comparison to his honor!"³¹ He made sure his last remarks recounted his "close" relationship with his "friend" General Grant, all to no avail. Found guilty on all counts, Major General Philip Sheridan dismissed Robinett from service.

However, yet again, this was not to be the end of the affair. A letter from the Bureau of Military Justice to the Secretary of War indicated, "a more lenient opinion in reference to conduct of Capt Robinett" was justified and an appeal directly to President Johnson, another Freemason, remitted all the charges and he was reinstated in January of 1867. The mood of the citizenry and the color of his uniform, no doubt, exasperated the situation. Undoubtedly, Robinett lost control while at DeRussy's camp. Indeed, due to their past relationship, taking him to that particular camp must have felt like pouring salt into his wounds. However, with three courts martial in under a year one can understand the willingness of the Department of the Gulf and General Sheridan to find Robinett totally at fault. In spite of evidence to the contrary, the army attributed his actions to intoxication. The army failed to recognize that there was something psychologically amiss with Robinett.

After returning to Wilmington, Robinett sought the counsel of his family and, once again, called upon his powerful friends for assistance. Henry's father went to see Senator Willard Saulsbury and Congressman John Nicholson and according to Henry, they took "great interest in my case."³² Henry wrote letters to both men and the Senator visited President Johnson, a fellow Freemason, three times about the matter. Johnson ordered his third court martial mitigated and Henry wrote his brother:

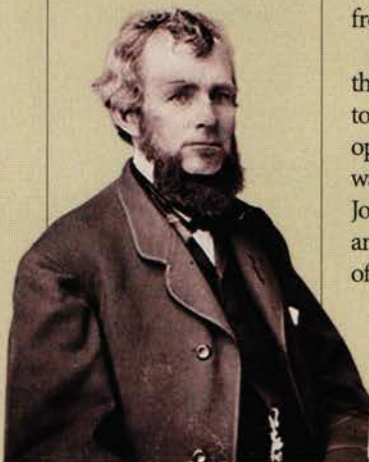
You see I have triumphed most gloriously over my enemies. I imagine they will be satisfied to 'let me alone' and 'Keep hands off' while Andrew Johnson is President anyhow. He is a just, fair man, and a noble patriot. I have ever had the fullest confidence in his fairness, justices and patriotism, and I now admire him more than ever before.

Robinett returned to New Orleans and the 1st U.S. Infantry in February 1867, "Now I am a full Captain in my own regiment and a 'Brevet' Major in the U.S. Army.... I was the persecuted of a set of military tyrants and mean, unprincipled, and envious beings, miscalled men and gentlemen." In April of 1867, he received news that his fiancée, Elsie Sherwood Starr, had died and his mood changed. He wanted no more of the army and sought an escape via a disability discharge relating to his wounding at Corinth. In his petition he stated:

I feel that I have become incapacitated for the performance of the duties required of a Regimental officer, in this climate. In consequence of a wound received in my head.... I suffer greatly, at all times, from the effects of excessive heat upon my wound, and when exposed to the heat of the Sun in this climate my suffering is almost unbearable. I can no longer endure any considerable mental or physical exertion without intense suffering. I have at times been affected mentally in a manner which admonishes me that farther continued exertion and exposure to the excessive heat of the Sun in a Southern climate, consequent upon the performance of the duties of an officer in the Army, may produce the most serious results.³³

The evidence presented by both the current surgeons of the 1st U.S., the one that had treated him after Corinth, and the Pension Board's own surgeons clearly indicated the Southern climate exacerbated his "condition" and all supported his request. The board, convened in Philadelphia and chaired by General George G. Meade, rejected his petition and ordered him to report to the Adjutant General for assignment. In expectation of being reassigned to a more northern clime, Henry reported and was ordered to return to New Orleans and the 1st U.S. Infantry which he did in January of 1868.

Upon his return to New Orleans, his friends began to notice even more uncharacteristic behavior. One officer noted, "From the 4th [of January] he was perfectly regular and temperate in his habits. Before that time he was absent for several months. I know that he did not take spirituous liquors during that time. In fact, he hardly ever left the Garrison. I remember many times getting his pay for him and doing various errands for him in the City. He was in his room most of the time when not attending



▲ Delaware senator George R. Riddle helped Robinett in his campaign to be reinstated in the army.

"His death was caused by a gunshot wound through the skull and brain inflicted by his own hand."

to Company business." He was unable to "foot a short column of figures, and always when he had the slightest mathematical calculation to make, became confused and sent for me to help him out of his difficulty." He would clasp his hands over his head and exclaim, "Oh my head, my head, it will burst. It is as hot as fire, I am becoming demented, and yet none of you believe that I am so." One skeptical friend commented about his lamentations, "I believe that he allowed himself to so believe, and that he permitted himself to dwell upon the matter and pondered upon it until he actually became insane. He knew that a wound in the head had produced that effect on others, and believed that his confusion and loss of mind were caused from the wound." Another however, took his comments at face value, "In my opinion [the wound] caused his insanity, for there is no doubt of him being insane. No officer in the Regt that knew him had the slightest doubt as to his insanity." One of his closest friends, Captain Leslie Smith observed his detached demeanor, "I had noticed him for some time previous as being very much changed at times would act very singular indeed and seemed to be indifferent to what was transpiring around him."³⁴ On 21 April he was ordered to take his company into the field.

Major Robinett's servant entered his room on the morning of 22 April 1868, to black his boots and lay out his clothes. The servant stated, "[Robinett] looked at him a moment in a wild and terrible manner then turned from him and covered his head with the bed clothes." The servant left the room and within a few seconds, a pistol shot rang out. Lieutenant Pierce in a letter to his father wrote:

Just after Revelie I heard the report of a pistol 2 or 3 shrieks and a noise like the falling of a body on the floor. I immediately went to the room from which the sound proceeded, and saw on the floor Captain Robinett. He was on his back, his legs were straightened, both arms resting on his breast. In his left hand was a Colts Army Revolver, the muzzle of which rested near his right shoulder. There was a bullet wound in the center of his forehead from which blood and brain were oozing. He had evidently stood before his looking glass, held the revolver in his left hand and pulled the trigger with his right hand. There is no doubt about him committing suicide. The surgeon was sent for but it was of no use or could do anything for him.³⁵

The surgeon at Jackson Barracks, B.A. Clements, wrote, "His death was caused by a gunshot wound through the skull and brains inflicted by his own hand whilst he was laboring under temporary insanity." On March 2, 1871, he stated, "that he was from time to time under my professional care for some weeks just prior to his death and that he was in an [unstable] state of mind for at least a fortnight before his death." Was the unit commander unaware of this condition? If not, why did Clements not notify him? One would think the unit surgeon would want to notify the command about a soldier so seriously impaired. If the command was aware, why did they not take action and relieve him of his duties? There is no doubt something was wrong with Major Robinett and all the signs point toward psychological disorders.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) seems to leap off the records in this case. Compiling a psychiatric diagnosis after the fact always leaves room for inaccuracy. The only detailed study of PTSD in the Civil War is by Eric T. Dean Jr, *Shook Over Hell: Post Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War*.³⁶ He examines the symptoms of PTSD in the context of the retired Civil War veterans and Robinett's circumstances seem to fit well. John Keegan wrote concerning the trauma of combat and its effects upon soldiers, "Each moment of combat imposes a strain so great that men will break down in direct relation to the intensity and duration of their exposure... psychiatric casualties are as inevitable as gunshot and shrapnel wounds in warfare."³⁷

Four distinguished U.S. Army psychologists assisted me in understanding the condition: Dr. Bruce A. Leeson, PhD, Clinical Psychologist; Captain Kyle Grohmann, currently immersed in suicide research data for the army; Dr. John Albrecht, a clinician-researcher "who has been focusing on PTSD as long as many folks have been in practice;" and Ms. Susanne Jones a psychometrician (the measurement of an individual's psychological attributes, including the knowledge, skills, and abilities a professional might need to work in a particular job or profession)

▼ **Officers quarters** at the Jackson Barracks, New Orleans. Robinett committed suicide in his room on the second floor.





▲ **Major General Philip Sheridan** dismissed Robinett from the army.

The army followed “the book” in the case of Robinett, but there are times when the book is too inflexible.

stationed at the Eisenhower Medical Center, Fort Gordon, Georgia.³⁸ PTSD shares some common symptoms with two other conditions: Attention Deficit Disorder and MTBI (Mild Traumatic Brain Injury-concussion). Henry quite likely experienced MTBI during his brush with death. PTSD, in this case was an unlikely diagnosis, since there is nothing to suggest any reliving of his wounding or excessive preoccupation with his wartime experiences. No hyper-vigilance or risk aversion is evident, nor is inappropriate appraisal of risk when jeopardy would otherwise be negligible apparent. There is nothing even remotely to suggest an excessive preoccupation with his experiences, another significant symptom of PTSD. Certainly, MTBI is a much more likely diagnosis in Robinett's case. He was unconscious lying under the gun carriage, his scalp peeled halfway back over his head, and most surely had a concussion caused by the impact of the ball.

Toward the end of our discussions Captain Grohmann leaned forward and said, “He is a narcissist, his letters and behavior point towards it.” Narcissism is a personality disorder in which someone has an excessive fascination with their self. Robinett fits most definitely into this category. His letters clearly indicate an absorption with self and an unawareness of the effect his actions had on those around him.

The fact that Robinett killed himself while observing the act in his mirror is an unusual aspect of his suicide. Little study has been carried out on suicide while looking in a mirror. In Alabama from 1983 to 1987, for example, there were 334 cases of suicide and of those only eleven involved a mirror. From a psychological point of view, the mirror represents the “soul's image.” Projecting from first person to second may be the psychic mechanism that enabled him to take his life.³⁹ It is likely Robinett was so disappointed with himself, his honor so impugned, that he punished himself not only by taking his life but also watching himself die. Finally, did he look in the mirror in order to aim at the spot where the headaches originated? Unfortunately, long-distance psychiatry can provide no answers.

What does the military owe its soldiers who decide to remain in service to their country after the vast majority return to civil life after a war? It would seem much more than they provided Robinett. What role and

responsibility did the United States Army and its leadership have in Henry Robinett's demise? Should a slot have been found at the rank of Captain in another unit? Numerous officers received a reduction of more than one grade after the war; Robinett simply did not adjust as well as most. There can be no doubt that Robinett deserved his first rebuke for the confrontation with Major Maloney, but his harsh treatment at the hands of the second court martial is more questionable. Does an officer of some renown deserve dismissal for questionable actions? Two men, in a heated confrontation, are unlikely to remember exactly what words they uttered. Since the incident turned on exact words and neither had corroborating witnesses, it is hard to fathom why the judgment was so extreme. In addition, it would seem the army could have reassigned Robinett to a different unit after this confrontation, in order to prevent future animosity. The army, no doubt, followed “the book” in the case of Robinett but there are times the book is too inflexible.

If the army surgeons in New Orleans had been more proactive in their treatment and had discussed Robinett's condition with his superior officers, perhaps they could have prevented his collapse or, at the least, had him relieved from duty. The army must assume some responsibility for his eventual suicide. Our Civil War veterans suffered long after the war was over. For Henry, and I suspect many others, the words of Sir Thomas Moore rang true:

There's yet a world, where souls are free,
Where tyrants taint not nature's bliss;—
If death that world's bright opening be,
Oh! who would live a slave in this?⁴⁰

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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Military University, where he is currently an adjunct instructor, and also serves as the Global War on Terror military historian for JANUS Research Group, Inc. supporting the United States Army Signal Corps historian, and also serves as a Senior Training Developer for JANUS. He has just released an in-depth study of Robinett: *Broomsticks to Battlefields* available at www.deedspublishing.com



► **President Andrew Johnson**, a fellow Mason, ordered Robinett's third court martial mitigated.

*"His death was caused by a gunshot wound through
the skull and brain inflicted by his own hand."*

ENDNOTES

1. Sir Thomas Moore, *After the Battle*.
2. Through the years, DMA has transformed numerous times, changing into Pennsylvania Military Academy, Pennsylvania Military College, PMC Colleges, Widener College, and finally Widener University. The source of early information comes to us from: Buxton, Henry J. *Pennsylvania Military College, The Story of One Hundred Years 1821-1921*. Chester, PA: 1921 or Moll, Clarence Russell. *A History of Pennsylvania Military College*. (Ph.D. diss. New York University, 1954). Buxton cites few sources for verification and Moll at times relies excessively upon Buxton. Those records that survive are located at Widener University Wolfgram Memorial Library Archives. An excellent source on Civil War DMA is an article written by a military history professor of mine at PMC, B. Franklin Cooling III. "Delaware Military Academy, 1859-1862." *Delaware History* 14, no. 3 (1971). This project would not be complete without noting the outstanding support and assistance provided by Rebecca Warda, PMC Museum Collections Manager, Jan Alexander, Reference Librarian and University Archivist, and newly minted 2nd LT Keith Bright, Widener class of 2009.
3. The only surviving letters from Henry, save this one, were written to his brother Theodore "Dorie" and reside at the University of the Pacific: Register of the Robinette Family Papers, 1845-1910, Robinette Family Papers, Mss183, Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. Trisha Pritchard with the Special Collections department was a great help in getting Henry's letters organized.
4. Henry Robinette Letter to Theodore Robinett, October 24, 1861. Register of the Robinette Family Papers, 1845-1910, Robinette Family Papers, Mss183, Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library.
5. "The five companies of the regiment in the Indian Territory at the outbreak of the war,—B, C, D, E and F,—marched to Fort Leavenworth, reaching that post May 31, 1861, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel W. H. Emory, who had been directed (April 17) to collect all the troops in the Indian Territory and take them to that station. This battalion was present at the battle of Wilson's Creek, Mo., August 10, 1861, losing 80 officers and men killed, wounded and missing." Theophilus Francis Rodenbough, William L Haskin eds. *The Army of the United States, Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief*. (New York: Maynard, Merrill, & Co. 1896) 407.
6. Rodenbough, 408.
7. Ibid.
8. The best study of the 2nd Texas was written by Joseph E Chance, "The Second Texas Infantry: From Shiloh to Vicksburg." Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1984. This unit played a significant role on both the successes of Henry Robinett and his ultimate failure and would cross paths with Robinett and his 1st US Infantry twice at both Corinth and Vicksburg where the 2nd Texas would ultimately surrender.
9. U.S. War Department. A Compilation of the *Official Record of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Washington: GPO, 1880-1901. Series I—Volume XVII/1 [S# 24] p. 160. Hereafter referred to as OR.
10. Elements of the 6th and 9th Texas, the 35th Mississippi, and the 42nd Alabama were attached to the 2nd TX for the assault. His force amounted to perhaps seven to eight hundred men, a "handful of dauntless men" according to Monroe F. Cockrell's *The Lost Account of the Battle of Corinth*.
11. William P. Rogers was raised on a plantation in Aberdeen, MS. Studied medicine and graduated at 21 then abandoned his practice to study law. He served in the Mexican War with Co. K (Tombigbee Guards) 1st Miss. Reg. (Mississippi Rifles) commanded by Col. Jeff Davis. [Handbook of Texas Online. Rogers, William Peleg] According to Cozzens, Rogers and Davis had a deep seated animosity that almost led to a duel during the Mexican War that Zachary Taylor prevented. [Cozzens, 254] Rogers gained a reputation for bravery during the capture of Monterrey with Gen. Zachary Taylor watching. President Taylor appointed Rogers US Consul in Vera Cruz for four years. He later settled in Texas in 1851 at Washington-on-the-Brazos, then Houston in 1859. Rogers was a cousin of Sam Houston's wife and a close personal friend. He felt secession was not right but felt deep loyalty to the South. Davis offered him command of 1st TX Inf. in VA which he rejected, preferring to help defend Texas, and accepted a junior command in 2nd TX. Davis held a deep-seated grudge for his rejection and refused to promote Rogers despite numerous recommendations to do so.
12. For an excellent discussion of bayonet tactics and their effects see Brent Nosworthy's "The Bloody Crucible of Courage: Fighting Methods and Combat Experience of the Civil War." New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003.
13. Another good work on the Battle of Corinth is Peter Cozzens', "The Darkest Days of the War: The Battles of Iuka & Corinth." Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. For an excellent study of field fortifications see Hess, Earl J. "Field Armies and Fortifications in the Civil War." Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
14. OR, SERIES I—VOLUME XVII/1 [S# 24] p. 248.
15. Dossman, Steven Nathaniel. *Campaign for Corinth: Blood in Mississippi*. Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2006, 119.
16. Letters Received by the Commission of the Adjutant General's Office, 1861-1870; (National Archives Microfilm Publication Main Series, Roll 578); 1867, 214-279.
17. While this is a very rapid progression, it was and still is not unusual for a lodge to suspend normal procedures for a man temporarily home from war. In another occurrence Daniel Citron, a member of the Lodge and Historic Site Manager, Auburn Heights Preserve indicated, "I have seen this before with a soldier in Jackson Lodge. The first commander of Fort Delaware, Captain A. A. Gibson, petitioned to join the lodge. Two months later, he received all three degrees on the same night. The lodge had received a special dispensation to do this. Looking at the timing of it, it was because Capt. Gibson knew he was going to be transferred to Washington D.C. and wanted to become a mason in Jackson Lodge because he was so moved by their Masonic funeral service for the first Confederate POW that died at Fort Delaware." I am deeply indebted to Robert Benson, Worshipful Master of the Lafayette Lodge, as well as his brothers in the lodge for his assistance with this project.
18. Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General Court Martial Case Files, 1809-1894; (National Archives record Group 153, File OO-1898. The letter written November 23, 1865 indicated his original report did not reach General Grant nor was it included in the ORs.
19. Family Papers, December 2, 1863 letter to Theodore Robinett.
20. Simon, John Y. *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*. Volume 11. June 1 – August 15, 1864. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois

► Robinett's grave
in the Chalmette
National Cemetery,
New Orleans.



- University Press, 1982, p. 455.
21. Letters Received by the Commission of the Adjutant General's Office, 1863-1870; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1064, Roll 125); 1865, S389—S597.
 22. Family Papers, July 25, 1865 letter to Theodore Robinett.
 23. There are a few studies of Louisiana and New Orleans during this period: Henry Clay Warmouth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006 [This is the memoirs of carpetbagger Warmouth who was elected governor in 1868 and eventually impeached in 1873.]. James G. Hollandsworth, Jr. *An Absolute Massacre: The New Orleans Race Riot of July 30, 1866*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 2001. James K. Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana 1862-1877*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1984. Each of these works presents interesting aspects of reconstruction New Orleans and the effect the stationing of United States troops had upon the citizenry.
 24. Tunnell, 20.
 25. Letters Received by the Commission of the Adjutant General's Office, 1863-1870; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1064, Roll 121); 1865, R755 – R919.
 26. "Isaac D. DeRussy was born in 1840 at Fort Monroe, Virginia. He began his service as a Second Lieutenant with the 1st United States Infantry and by the end of the Civil War was a Captain. He participated in the siege of Corinth in May and June of 1862 and was brevetted Major in 1865 for faithful and meritorious service during the war. He also served with the 4th, 14th and 11th United States Infantry regiments. While commanding the 11th regiment as a Colonel, he also commanded Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in 1891 and 1892. On 10 August 1898 he led his regiment against Spanish forces near Hormiguero, Puerto Rico. He was retired on 1 April 1902 as a brigadier general and died on 17 February 1923 in New York City. He was buried in Section 3 of Arlington National Cemetery." <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/idderrussy.htm>.
 27. The complete transcript and supporting documents for the Robinett's second court martial are here: Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General Court Martial Case Files, 1809-1894; (National Archives Record Group 153, File MM-3435).
 28. Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori is a line from the Roman poet Horace's Odes (III.2.13).
Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori: How sweet and fitting it is to die for one's country:
mors et fugacem persequitur virum Death pursues the man who flees,
nec parcat inbellis iuventae Spares not the hamstrings or cowardly backs
poplitibus timidoque tergo. Of battle-shy youths.
The phrase can be found at the front entrance to the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater at the Arlington National Cemetery. It is also found on the second monument of the Point Lookout Confederate Cemetery in Point Lookout, MD, and at the Confederate Cemetery in the Manassas Battlefield National Park.
 29. The Varieties Theatre was one of the most important playhouses in New Orleans also known as Placide's "Varieties," which stood on Gravier, between Carondelet and Baronne, near the site of the present Cotton Exchange. Varieties Alley still preserves its name. The house opened in 1849 under the management of Tom Placide, who was himself an actor, and not infrequently took part in the plays that he produced. Built by an association known as the "Varieties Club," which came into existence in 1849, and was connected with another dramatic club, the Histrionics, the origin of which has been traced back as far as the year 1840. The theater burned in 1854 and was rebuilt the next year, opening under the management of Dion Boucicault, who called it "The Gaiety." It regained its old name and burned again in 1870. The proprietors now changed the location of their theater, purchasing land in Canal Street and Dauphine, where the Maison Blanche now stands. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United_States/Louisiana/New_Orleans/_Texts/KENHNO/45*.html
 30. Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General Court Martial Case Files, 1809-1894; (National Archives Record Group 153, File OO-1898).
 31. Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General Court Martial Case Files, 1809-1894; (National Archives Record Group 153, File OO-1898. Robinett quotes from *After The Battle*, a poem written by Sir Thomas Moore. This project only came about due to a partial research grant from American Military University to which I owe a debt of thanks. I am also deeply indebted to Vonnice Zullo of Horse Soldiers Research. As a fulltime military historian under contract to the U.S. Army, without her numerous trips to the National Archives on my behalf this project would not exist in its current form.
The phrase "when all but life and honor's lost" comes from *After the Battle* Sir Thomas Moore
 32. Family Papers, February 13, 1867 letter to Theodore Robinett.
 33. Letters Received by the Commission of the Adjutant General's Office, 1861-1870; (National Archives Microfilm Publication Main Series, Roll 578); 1867, 214-279.
 34. Records of the Veterans Administration, Department of the Interior: Pension Office. Record Group 15, Certificate # 153431. Henry's father applied for a pension from the government claiming his son was his sole source of income. Within the file are numerous supporting documents, checks issued on the National Bank of New Orleans from his son that is quite unique. He was granted a pension of \$17/month in 1871.
 35. Ibid.
 36. Dean, Eric T. Jr. *Shook Over Hell Post-Traumatic Stress: Vietnam, and the Civil War*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997.
 37. Keegan, John, *The Face of Battle*. (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 329.
 38. Dr. Leeson informed me before our discussions: "We do need to be absolutely clear that we come as individuals and speak each for ourselves. We do not represent the U.S. Army, Eisenhower Army Medical Center or Fort Gordon. We are coming to address issues raised by an historic individual in light of current research and scientific understanding. Nothing we say can be used to draw inferences, conclusions or make statements about the current situation in the U.S. Armed Forces, nor can any statement be allowed about Soldiers in the current conflicts."
 39. Riddick, LeRoy, Pamela G. Mussell, Gary D. Cumberland. "The Mirror's Use in Suicide." *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*. Volume 10, Issue 1, 1989.
 40. *After the Battle*, Sir Thomas Moore



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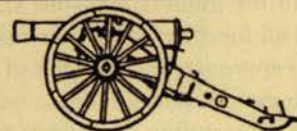


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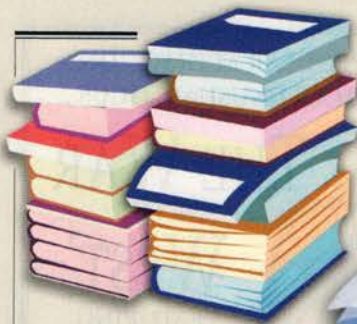
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Briefings Reviews

STARVING THE SOUTH:

How the North Won the Civil War

by Andrew F. Smith (St. Martin's Press, April 2011, 277 pages, \$27.99, ISBN 978-0-312-60181-2)

Andrew Smith, a faculty member at the New School in Brooklyn and author of many books on culinary history, has turned his attention to the Civil War and in doing so produced a first-rate volume that adds a new dimension to our understanding of the war. Others have pointed to facets of the subject—the bread riots, the unequal distribution of food within the Confederacy, the hunger of the soldiers, etc—but Smith brings it all together, so that the reader comes to appreciate the interplay of the failure to exempt skilled railroad workers from conscription, the laissez-faire ideology that precluded central direction of the railroads or adequate oversight of blockade running, the introduction of impressment and the resultant hoarding, speculation and corruption, and the ruinous policies that fueled inflation. In short, the managerial inadequacy of the plantation-owning class, who largely controlled the government, and their failure to mobilize their society for war. Problems of inadequate distribution of food that might have been solved—if they had even been addressed—in 1862 were beyond solution in 1863 and reached crisis proportions in 1864.

A particularly telling chapter is devoted to the Northern (civilian) plan in 1864 to provide traditional fare, and plenty of it, for the men of the Army of the Potomac for Thanksgiving. Money was donated, food purchased, distribution organized, and the resultant feast was a major morale-booster for the men in blue. Piqued, the secessionists determined to provide a similar treat for their soldiers in Virginia, in the form of a

magnificent New Year's meal. The *Richmond Examiner* predicted "the biggest barbecue ever gotten up on this continent" would be provided to the troops on "a table twenty miles long." Despite the planning, prepared food, contributions, good intentions, optimistic projections, and positive reports, the dinner was a bust. One soldier described the "3 or 4 bites of bread and 3 bites of meat" as "quite a snack for a feast." Others called it "a complete fizzle," a "grand farce," and a "complete failure." Many received nothing. Two days later the *Richmond Examiner* claimed that speculators had ended up with much of the money collected. Morale in the ranks plummeted.

Starving the South is an eye-opening book about how an agrarian nation failed even in its most elementary task—feeding its people. Beautifully written, I commend this book to all those interested in understanding why the Confederacy lost the war.

—Keith Poulter

Robert E. Lee and the Fall of the Confederacy, 1863-1865

By Ethan S. Rafuse (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008. Pp. 282, \$34.95, ISBN 0-7425-5125-3).

General Robert E. Lee assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia on June 1, 1862. Over the next eleven months under Lee's command the Confederate army won a series of victories along the Peninsula, at Second Manassas, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville. Despite the battlefield success, however, nearly three years later, on April 9, 1865, General Lee, compelled to yield to "overwhelming numbers and resources," surrendered his army at Appomattox Court House. How Lee's Army of Northern Virginia went from soaring success to collapse within a period of three years has been the subject of extensive historical

debate. In *Robert E. Lee and the Fall of the Confederacy*, Ethan Rafuse follows Lee's army from success at Chancellorsville in May 1863, to surrender at Appomattox in April 1865. To explain the collapse of the Army of Northern Virginia, Rafuse examines the strategic, operational, logistic, and political factors contributing to Lee's surrender.

The majority of Rafuse's work offers a traditional examination of the final two years of the Army of Northern Virginia's campaigns. In the last chapter Rafuse explores factors contributing to Lee's surrender. Using the North's superior resources and numbers explanation as a starting point, Rafuse argues that though the North's overwhelming resources did contribute to the Confederacy's collapse such an explanation is too simplistic. Because the North enjoyed superior resources and numbers, Confederate independence would be won, not by a strategy of conventional attrition, but by a strategy of exhaustion. Rafuse argues that the majority of northerners continued to support the war and their "unshaken resolve to preserve the Union" made the South's strategy of exhaustion an "exercise in futility" (256).

Rafuse offers a well balanced account of the Confederacy's collapse by exploring both internal and external factors leading to Appomattox. General Lee's battlefield success was determined, in part, by circumstances in the Union army and in Washington D.C. Rafuse contends that poor civil-military relations constrained the Army of the Potomac and allowed Lee's forces to enjoy battlefield victories. "Incessant meddling" from President Lincoln's administration and the imposition of the "headquarters doctrine" prevented the Army of the Potomac's high command from maneuvering to the Confederacy's vulnerable point—the James River. General Ulysses Grant's ability to "neutralize the influence of Washington" allowed him to pursue a relentless strategy in the Overland Campaign and conduct operations along the James River (260). Grant's campaigns of 1864 and 1865 forced Lee to abandon his preferred strategy of maneuver, and fight defensively around Richmond. By the spring of 1865 as the Army of the Potomac maneuvered closer to Richmond, the will of Lee and the Confederate people to main-

tain the war effort was "gone" because the "Yankees had crushed it" (261).

—Jennifer M. Murray
Auburn University

Baring the Iron Hand: Discipline in the Union Army

by Ramold, Steven J. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-0-87580-408-8. \$40.00)

Although topics related to discipline have been touched on in many studies of the armies and the common soldier, Steven Ramold is the first historian to thoroughly examine the subject in its own right. The central theme of *Baring the Iron Hand* is the persistent tension between citizen-soldiers and military authority. Freedom-loving individualists used to running their own lives inevitably clashed with the demands of their officers as well as established traditions of military justice. Ideas of manhood, conventional morality, and war-time demands also shaped the behavior of enlisted men and officers alike, especially when West Pointers commanded volunteers.

Ramold points out how many soldiers simply tried to live as they had as civilians with entirely predictable results. Anyone fascinated by various forms of human misbehavior will find plenty of examples throughout the book. Fights and brawls—often fueled by alcohol—became commonplace in the camps. Attempts to control drinking, gambling, and other vices met with at best partial success. Insubordination took various forms, ranging from straggling, to malingering, to mockery, to assaults on officers. And for soldiers who for whatever reason could never conform to military discipline, there was always desertion. That particular evil—exacerbated by bounty jumping—plagued Union armies throughout the war though it was often dealt with rather leniently.

Based on a sample of some five thousand courts-martial and various other primary sources, Ramold thoroughly dissects military justice, offering excellent descriptions of procedures and revealing details about individual cases. The "flexibility, leniency, and individuality" (p. 342) of these proceedings belied stereotypes about military justice. By the same token a range of punishments meted

out to offenders did not always serve as a deterrent. Men who had witnessed an execution described the event and their own reaction in considerable detail, often casting doubts on both its justice and effectiveness.

Even veteran students of the Civil War will find fresh information in these pages. Although overly long sentences and paragraphs sometimes slow the pace, *Baring the Iron Hand* is a deeply researched and quite useful monograph that fills a significant gap in the literature.

—George C. Rable
University of Alabama

Lincoln's Veteran Volunteers Win the War: The Hudson Valley's Ross Brothers and the Union Fight for Emancipation

by D. Reid Ross. (SUNY Press, 2008, 450 pp, ISBN 978-0-7914-7461-3, \$35.00)

I have tremendous respect for D. Reid Ross's effort in writing his book on the four Ross brothers and their comrades. Like many descendants of Civil War soldiers, Ross heard family stories passed down through the generations. Ross did not have much to go on besides the oral stories—only a seventeen page post war memoir written by his grandfather and six war-time letters written by his grandfather and three brothers. His curiosity to learn more about his ancestors and separate fact from fiction gradually consumed him and he spent thirty years researching.

His research led him to the conclusion that the Union Veteran Volunteers and three-year regiments played a major role in winning the war. About 200,000 Union men chose to become long term volunteers. They would fight in more battles and since they were often at or near the hottest spot on the major battlefields, these units suffered the highest casualty rates. Three of the four Ross brothers fought in these long term units and the fourth brother joined as soon as he turned eighteen and fought for the remainder of the war. Ross develops this important story as well as what motivated the Ross brothers and other veteran soldiers to fight.

However, sometimes the story of the Ross brothers and the contributions of the Veteran Volunteers get lost in the huge amount of tactical detail. The Ross

brothers fought in some of the most complicated and confusing battles of the war—Stones River, Chickamauga, and the Wilderness. At times the book loses focus as it goes into extreme tactical detail at the divisional level. I greatly admire Ross's thorough research and ambitious effort, but a simpler story might have been better.

There are a couple of historical errors. The 12th Corps did not take the Orange Plank Road to Chancellorsville as stated on page 74. During the Chancellorsville Campaign, two divisions of Longstreet's Corps were in southeast Virginia, not North Carolina, as also stated on page 74. Jackson's famous march at Chancellorsville occurred during the day of May 2, not during the night of May 1-2 as stated on page 75. On page 183, he states that Lank Ross's company had over 700 casualties during the war, almost 54% of the company. He must mean Lank's regiment. On pages 222 and 223, he states that Warren led the 6th Corps at Wilderness, Warren commanded the 5th Corps.

There is much to admire about this ambitious book and many readers will enjoy it. Eight readers have posted comments on Amazon's website and all eight gave the book the maximum five stars.

—Mac Wyckoff

Stephen R. Taaffe, Commanding Lincoln's Navy: Union Naval Leadership During the Civil War.

Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009.

The U.S. Navy played a key role in the Civil War, helping to win some of the conflict's key battles, including Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862, Shiloh in April 1862, New Orleans in April-May 1862, Vicksburg in July 1863, Mobile Bay in August 1864, and Fort Fisher in January 1865. In this important book, Stephen R. Taaffe, professor of history at Stephen F. Austin State University, examines the roles played by Union naval commanders.

Understandably, President Abraham Lincoln devoted most of his time spent on military matters to the army, considered to be the key to a Union victory. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles and his able assistant, Gustavus V. Fox, carried on the naval war largely on their own, determining strategy and selecting

key commanders. The task facing Welles was daunting. At the outset he had only several dozen warships available to operate against more than 3,500 miles of Confederate coastline, and for much of this distance the outer banks presented a double coastline. The Mississippi and its tributary rivers added another 3,615 miles, and sounds, bayous, rivers, and inlets along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts constituted another 2,000 miles. The Union was also handicapped by the fact that the largest Southern ports boasted substantial defensive works.

Welles and Fox plunged into the task. They secured merchant ships and oversaw their conversion into warships, and they embarked on a major naval building program that would see the U.S. Navy grow to second in size only to that of Great Britain. They also had to secure the officers and seamen for the new ships and establish a vast logistical network to keep them supplied. Welles set strategic objectives and appointed (and removed) commanders to accomplish these goals. Welles was a good judge of character, and he and Fox for the most part made excellent personnel decisions. As Taaffe notes, unlike the Union Army, which had a number of political appointees to high command, Welles' task was made easier in that all of the senior naval officers were professionals. The vast majority of men selected for squadron command performed well. One could argue that, throughout the war, the navy was not only better led but made fewer strategic mistakes than did the Union army.

Taaffe begins with a chapter treating Welles and his role in the development of naval policy. He then moves through the naval operations, emphasizing command decisions. During the course of the war, the U.S. Navy had nineteen commanders of its six important naval squadrons. Individuals receiving special attention include Charles Stringham, Francis Du Pont, Andrew Foote, Henry Bell, Phillips Lee, Charles Davis, David Farragut, Henry Thatcher, Charles Wilkes, John Dahlgren, and David Porter. Unlike principal Union army commanders, most of them remain largely unknown to the American public today because they worked in the relative obscurity of the blockade operations. Taaffe is perhaps hardest on Du

Pont, who failed to realize Welles' cherished goal of taking Charleston by naval assault. Dahlgren, his replacement, also failed, and it is hard to imagine how this task could have been accomplished without army cooperation.

Taaffe has carefully mined the primary documents, including the thirty-volume *Official Records of the Union And Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* and important archival collections, but also the memoirs and secondary works. Taaffe's well-written study is enhanced by a number of excellent illustrations, while maps scattered throughout the text show the locations of important naval actions.

—Spencer C. Tucker
Lexington, Virginia

Heroes and Cowards: The Social Face of War.

By Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn.
Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press,
2008. ISBN 978-0-691-13704-9; \$27-95.

Heroes and Cowards is an ambitious, quantitative study of soldier motivation; it draws conclusions that carry significance well beyond the subject at hand. Working from Robert Fogel's meticulously compiled database of 41,000 white and black Union soldiers, Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn offer statistical answers to a number of thorny questions. Ever since the pioneering works of Bell Wiley, historians have examined motivation, performance, and morale largely by culling material from the diaries and letters of the men themselves. This admittedly impressionistic and often scattershot approach has obvious limitations, limitations that could presumably be remedied by a more scientific, statistical analysis.

It would be easy to accuse the authors of committing the quantitative fallacy: what counts is what can be counted. And like other quantifiers, they huff and puff a bit too much about technique; so too their statistical conclusions need to be presented in a clearer and more organized way. Yet they nicely incorporate secondary works as well as apt quotations from soldiers to give their statistical analysis a more human face. Their central concern is the effect of "social networks" on soldier behavior, and their work is deeply

indebted to sociological classics such as Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*. In Costa and Kahn's view, the relationship between the soldiers, their home communities, and their companies went far toward predicting behavior in camp, battle, and in prison.

Heroes and Cowards examines the soldiers' experiences in relationship to their social networks. The authors measure the unit cohesion and effectiveness of Civil War companies with desertion rates. The findings are interesting: the "best" soldiers tended to be older, native-born or Irish, better educated, and wealthier men who served in companies with men from the same community and of similar age and occupational status. The more diverse the company, the higher the desertion rate. For the United States Colored Troops, former slaves were somewhat better soldiers than free blacks, and as with white soldiers, more homogenous companies were better companies.

Those soldiers taken prisoner with a larger number of comrades were more likely to survive. And the same characteristics that correlated with soldiers' performance also affected how prisoners fared in the camps. In short, whatever the experiences and fates of various soldiers and their companies, Costa and Kahn conclude that social networks were of prime importance. Even after the war, soldiers decided to settle—whether in their home communities or elsewhere—based on their wartime performance and hometown characteristics. Some communities ostracized deserters and others didn't. These same factors influenced the complex transition of slaves into freemen, though here the data is not quite so rich.

As the authors duly note, Civil War soldiers preferred to interact with people like themselves. Few of their conclusions will probably surprise students of the Civil War, but they carry some fascinating and potentially unsettling implications for twenty-first century Americans. It unfortunately takes Costa and Kahn about the half the book to set up their argument so readers may grow impatient, but there is a payoff and one that will profit future studies of Civil War soldiers.

—University of Alabama
George C. Rable

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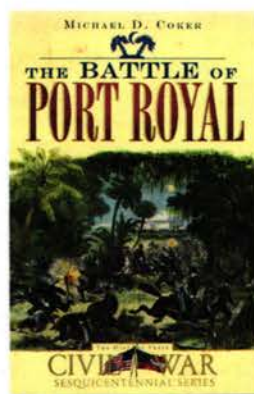
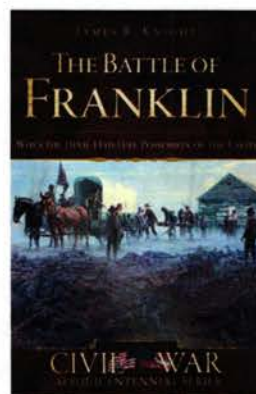
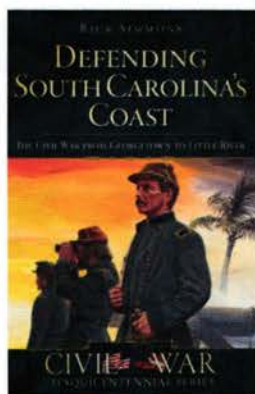
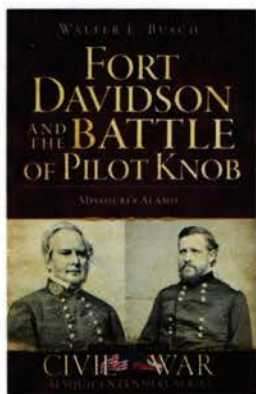
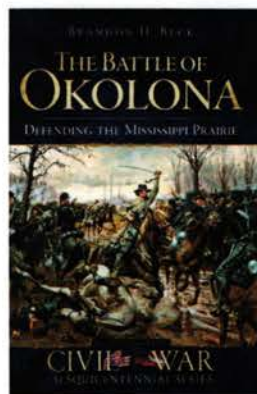
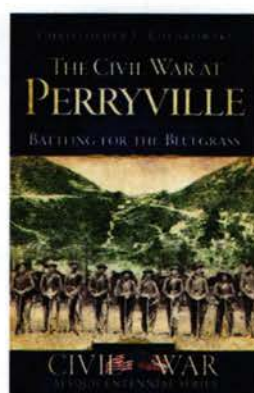
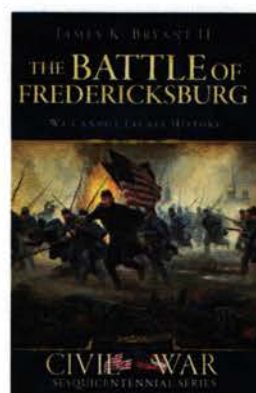
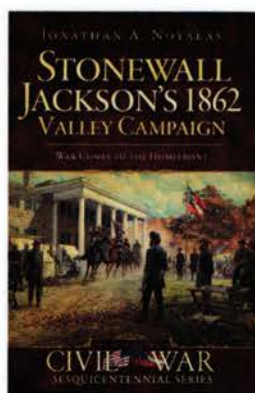
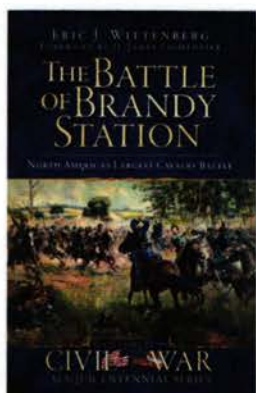
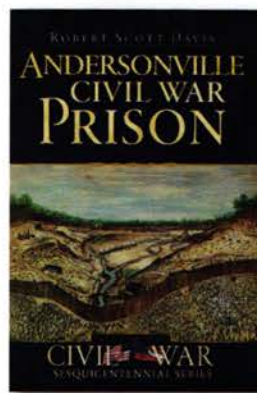
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